

YOUR SOUL ~~is~~
is
MINE!

"TRY ME
ONCE
I
MIGHT LET
YOU GO
TRY ME
TWICE
AND I WILL
OWN
YOUR
SOUL"



Welcome back Editorial note readers! The 13.06 issue you now hold in your hands is full of writing about our topics, stereotypes (who am I), knowledge and cheating — not that they necessarily go together, but that's what this issue is full of nonetheless.

Speaking of stereotypes... Stereotypes and judgments are difficult subject matter to write about because we're always either trying to break those stereotypes or we're doing everything in our power to reaffirm them. And yet no one likes to be stereotyped, but everyone does it. As a matter of fact, we're sure there will be those people who will hold this issue in their hands that have certain negative stereotypes of the population we serve. We could hear it now: "These young people need to be locked up, so they can learn their lesson." "They all must've done something horrible to be where they are." "Locking them up is the only way they'll learn." It is statements like these that keep us motivated to keep pushing this publication until the wheels fall off. For though we do come across youngsters who do everything in their power to reaffirm those stereotypes, that isn't usually our experience.

In fact, it's quite the contrary. Each week we go into workshops, we're amazed at the talent and compassion we're able to witness. From the kid who's frightened that he may be facing way more time than he expected when he got caught, to the daughter who misses her mother, or the brother who feels guilt because his little sister needs him and he's incarcerated, they all feel, they're all genuine, and they are all definitely breaking the foolish stereotypes of us out here. We even find that some of them don't deserve to be locked up at all. That, for some, it was just a matter of being a victim of circumstances. And we all know that someone who victimizes was once a victim themselves.

Do you think people just wake up one morning and decide to break the law? If you do, then you're probably one of those people that hold the stereotype that everyone incarcerated deserves to be there. People don't just wake up and decide to commit crimes, it's a process of regurgitation. We soak in what we see and experience and then regurgitate that on the world. Some people regurgitate it by staying in school and vowing to never be one of the less fortunate ones. Most go with what they know and start hustling, gang-banging, and/or becoming stick-up kids, but whatever the case it's a process and not just an overnight decision. So to judge a young person on one single act in their short lives is absurd. These kids were getting A's in school not too long ago, calling next for a game of ball, and even taking pride in helping their parents around the house. So when did we start to look at them as if they were guilty? When did they lose their innocence? And is losing their innocence a reflection of their behavior or a reflection of our perception of that behavior? Aren't we the ones who are taking away our children's innocence?

When we judge our children, we are indirectly judging ourselves because our children are mini-reflections of us. So to say that this young person needs to be locked up and that one needs to never get out again, in essence, is saying that we need to be locked up and we never need to get out again. How can we look in the mirror and complain about the reflection without first complaining about ourselves? And furthermore, how can we look to solve the problems of our children, without first solving our own problems?

We're going into workshops again tonight and we can guarantee that we will meet numerous young people with incredible talent, tremendous insights, and an uncanny way of expressing him or herself. But leave it to the rest of us and this very same kid is labeled a menace to society, an at-risk youth, or even a future death-row inmate. Whatever the labels are, they're usually wrong and disgusting. We can either reaffirm them or break them and being the rebel that this editor is, we're all for breaking them. Why don't you break the stereotypes you have of this population and read what they have to say about your stereotypes? Why don't you continue to read and see who they really are? For since the days of our creation over ten years ago, we have

been nothing but amazed by the thoughts, feelings, and beliefs of the young people who write for The Beat Within, and all we want to do is share our amazement with the rest of you. Have a great week and we'll be back the same time next week to drop you all some more heat.

Before we call it an ed note, let's take a look at the topics as they were read aloud in our numerous workshops prior to the writing that is featured in this issue.

The first topic, "Letter Of Knowledge" - Every single one of you reading this topic is in the position of sharing some great and important knowledge. It's obvious, many of you have made some poor choices in your life. It's probable many of you have been dealt lousy hands, to unbelievable hands considering those who are a part of your life, to the places, people and things you have seen. Consider the platform you have, The Beat Within, and take this time to share knowledge to your readers. Educate your readers. Write from experience. Share a story or two that will help others gain further insight due to the knowledge you share this week. We encourage you to (re)introduce yourself. Tell us where you been and how you arrived at this place and time. Reflect on the positives and the negatives in your life, and then speak on what you see occurring today in your life and in the community at large, and then share what you believe must be done. Now that would be one hell of a letter of knowledge!

The second topic, "Who Am I?" - Now everybody always has stereotypes about everybody. For instance, the judge looks at your file, and all the judge sees is a ward of the court, a juvenile offender getting caught up for a 211. But the judge doesn't really know you. Now you have a reputation to hold up. Everybody is labeling you now. People are assuming that you are a thug, maybe a low life, or maybe you're a savage. They see you dressed the way you're dressed and they start making assumptions. Everybody around you is passing judgment on what kind of person you are. But who are you? Don't none of these people really know you. They might have heard about you, they might have even met you a couple times, but they don't really know what kind of person you are. So who are you? Tell everyone right now who you are as a person, and what kind of person you are. Tell all these people that are stereotyping you something about yourself that they do not know. Tell us who you are and what you're about?

The third topic, "Caught Cheating Stories..." - Anyone who's been in a relationship has more than likely been cheated on or has cheated on the other person. What we're interested in this week are the stories of when you got caught cheating or when you caught someone cheating on you. And if you don't have any stories as far as cheating in relationships, then talk about some other times you got caught cheating. Tell us a story about when you got caught cheating on a test, or when you got caught cheating at the dinner table when your mother wanted you to eat all of your food. This topic is asking you to tell a story about when you got caught cheating, so all you great storytellers, please step up to the plate...

Lastly, "Fabulous Funny Baby Stories" - We've all seen babies or young kids do things naturally that are really hilarious, that they don't even know are funny. One baby falls asleep in his highchair with his head back, his little mouth wide open, and drools out his icky squash baby food down his chin. Another, sitting in his highchair, flops his face into the chocolate frosting of his first birthday cake. A two-year old in his stroller on a bus starts crying and another little child further down on the bus hears that baby wailing, and in sympathy, starts crying himself. Can you remember a story about something funny you or one of your brothers and sisters did when you or they were little? Or maybe you saw a baby you don't even know do something sweet and funny. So, please write a story about any young child who did something really silly and cute.

This issue goes out to all of you in love, or who have been in love. Happy Valentine's Day people!

The Beat Within, a weekly newsletter of writing and art by incarcerated youth, is published by Pacific News Service.

At The Beat Within, we go through a lot of trouble to censor inappropriate sexual remarks, foul language, and gang references. There is enough tension in our communities already—we don't aim to bolster it. It is in The Beat's interest to promote peace and unity. Our goal is to educate one another.

The Beat Within publishes the opinions and views expressed by the participants in our workshops. This is simply the pure voice of the youth. The views you read do not necessarily reflect those of the publisher, editor or staff. All rights are reserved. Nothing from this publication can be reproduced without our written permission.

To our writers: What you write could be hazardous to you. Your words have consequences, and could be used to incriminate you. Try to illuminate your feelings and viewpoints without running the risk of providing ammunition for those who might use your words against you.

Co-founders: Sandy Close and David Inocencio

Senior Editors: David Inocencio

Assistant Editors: Michael Kroll, Will Roy

Graphics/Layout Editor: Manen Pau

Staff: Pauline Craig, Jill Wolfson, Allan Tinker, Patricia Johnson, Amanda Ables, Omar Turcios, Dennis Morton, Sheerly Avni, Jennifer Clarke, Britany Bernard, Perry Jones, Tal Ariel, Margo Ariel Brockman, Brenda Navarro-Duante, Elizabeth Crawford, Morghan Velez Young, Siliva Mortenson, Michaela Levin, Griffin Jones, Eric Lee, Andrew Barba, Estella Cisneros, Allen Huang, Nic Reiner, Angelica Zabanal, Charles Labanowski, Kolby Hanson, Chelsea Sprick, Akima Edwards, Alfred Dersidan and Neela Banerjee.

The Maricopa County, Phoenix, Arizona, Juvenile Probation Department Beat Staff: Joe Szulecowski, M.A., Lisa Donsker, M.C., Hillary Shluker, M.C., Lisa Karczewski, M.A. The detention staff are: Tammie Utter, Shannon Lechner, D. Scott Herrmann, Ph.D. Clinical Director.

Bernalillio County, New Mexico "The Land of Enchantment" Juvenile Probation Department Beat Staff: Steve Serna

Art: Much props to everyone for the great art this week.

Spiritual Advisor: Jack Jacqua

Special Volunteer: Nancy DeMartini

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www.thebeatwithin.org

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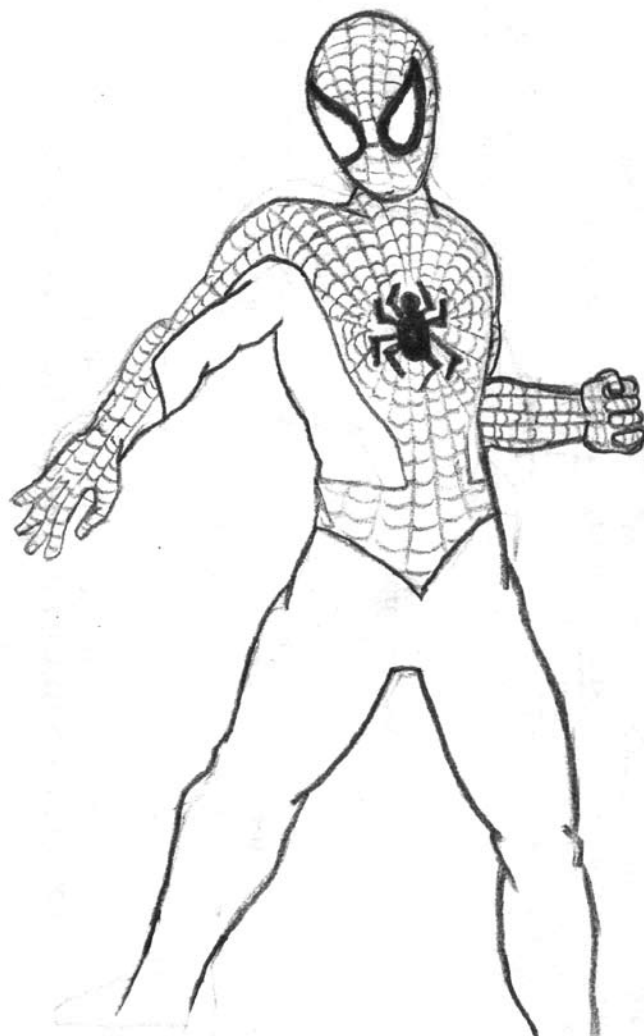
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My Pain

My pain is really there like in real life. Mane, each and every day I'm strugglin', tryin' not to lose my life. Every day I'm tryin' to make some money to take care of myself.

Mama done passed when I was one. Step dad touched all up on me until I killed his ass. They found me innocent on 1st degree murder at the of eight!

See, no one knows me nor my pain. I live through all of it every day. In and out of the halls, 'tryin' to stay out. My pain hurts me every day. Try to stay cool, but ninjas keep on pushing till I go bad. People judge me every single day because how I look, how I act, etc. I get high all da time because it relaxes me and feel like all my pain is gone... until my high goes down and I'm back seeing my pain and struggles.

Every day I try to look past it, and every day it stays right there. I feel like going crazy. Best friend got killed in '07. Got taken away from my daddy in '06. When that happen, I felt like my whole world was going to end. My dad is my best friend.

I got pain all in my veins, and I want it all to go so I can start over. I pray to god every night asking for forgiveness.

My pain? Well, there's no one out there can tell me what I don't already know in this life. My pain is stronger than what I feel, but as long as I love myself, I believe I will make it.

-Rina, San Francisco

From The Beat: We know you can make it, too, Rina. You say people keep on pushing you and then you push back. But who gets hurt when you push back? Seems like you're going to have to learn a new way of dealing with the jerks of the world (and they're everywhere!), unless you want to keep paying the price. What you have had to endure is more than most, and more than any child should have to cope with — and we hope you are talking to counselors or psychologists because you don't know all you need to know, and they can help you come to terms with your past. Now that you are no longer a child, you have to learn how to act as a responsible adult. The only other alternative is to continue to act like you've acted in the past, and continue to see the same consequences...

Who am I

Honestly, I have no idea who I am! I am just another person in this world trying to survive the four-letter word called "life."

To everyone I am just another teenager that gets into trouble and has no respect for anybody, but to me I am much more than that. I am a teenager that has been brought up in a world of drugs, gang members, addicts and killers.

I have seen so much in my years. And I have no idea who I am. Or what I can be. I still have a full life ahead of me.

So today, I cannot say who I am but I can tell you what I'm about. I am a young lady and I hang around mostly gang members. I have drug addicts as parents. I've seen most of my family and friends die from drugs, or be shot in a gang.

I am not in a gang but I am down for my block and my homies. When I'm on the outs in the streets, I am known as a big time hustla in San Jose. I dress differently than most, but I really care less about what people think or say. I am just who I am and I really don't give a shhh. about what people think about me. So, you can say that is who I am. But really I have no idea who I am today, or tomorrow, but when I am older I will be able to tell you who I am.

-Shortii, Santa Clara

From The Beat: This is a really eloquent piece and even though you keep insisting on not knowing who you are, it really seems like you have a very good idea about who you are, where you come from and what that means.

Tired Of Gang Banging

What's good with The Beat? Me, nothing much, same stuff just a different day, ya heard. I can't wait 'til I get out so I can start my life over because I'm 'bout to be 18 and my life is really 'bout to start.

I gotta take care of my son. If I don't take care of my son I wouldn't feel like a man. I really wish and pray every night that I get out and change, because I don't want to get killed out in the streets.

I'm tired of gang banging. I really wish that someone younger than me is reading this so you can learn from this knowledge I'm trying to give

All right, peace. I'm out. Be smooove, ya heard me!

-Mb, San Francisco

From The Beat: We want to applaud both your decision to stop banging, and the courage it took for you to write it! Even more, we love the fact that you want to be a father to your son. As you have figured out, that means much more than just words of love. Being there for him is what defines the role of father, and it sounds to us that you are ready to be just that! Good for you!

In And Out

You say your down with the game, but when the life hits you, you say you're out, you say you're in a new world and you're not going to turn back. But when someone comes and pulls you to the side, you say you're out of your new life and going back to your old one with all the drama, fights, killing, dope and all.

You're in and out. You get confused until you have a dream about you getting killed first. So you got to beat them to the punch line. When you're about to pull the trigger and they ask you,

"Are you going to do it?" you say yeah but your heart says no. Again you confused. Each and every day you ask yourself, are you in or out?

-Rina, San Francisco

From The Beat: It's so obvious that you have a first-class mind, Rina. Now's the time to put it to your benefit! That dream about getting shot is terrifying and telling you something. One Beat writer dreamed that when he came home from prison, his family had forgotten who he was. Don't let that happen to you! The worst thing we can imagine is making that decision to be out of the game one second too late, and spending the rest of your life wishing, "If only..." If not now, when? If not you, who?

Missin' You Both

I'm missing you dearly. Be sitting up here in jail thinkin' like why it had to be you. You were my best friend, girly. I looked up to up as a role model. It's almost been a year since you've been gone. I cried, I sobbed, I got mad. I tried to not think about it no matter what. I looked at you pix and I thought about, "I love you Nish, (7/12/89-3/16/07).

RIP Nish. You will always be missed. I'm missin' you Mommy. I only known you for four years. Then you left to go to LA to get married. You told me you were comin' back for me. I believed you. Then you died in that car crash. After that, you were gone, never came back. So I cried, sobbed, I got mad thinking it was my fault.

Mommy I thought you were mad at me because of what he did to me, and I didn't tell you. Mommy, I love you. Just wish you didn't have to go so soon. Mommy, I love you so much. You will always be in my heart. RIP Sarah Pollock, Dec. 1, 1975-Jan. 8, 1998. Your baby girl,

-Rina, San Francisco

From The Beat: These are heavy burdens for one so young to have to bear. We're sorry for the loss of your mother and your best friend. We hope you can find a way to break the cycle that leads you here, so you can live a long and productive life, and keep both these beloved people alive in your heart.

Todo Me Salio Mal Poco A Poco

La verdad la suerte que he tenido hasta ahora no mal ni bien, pero hubo una vez que todo me salio mal en la casa y en el trabajo. Hubo una vez que me corrieron del trabajo, que no sabía nada de mi familia, no sabía quien era, me sentia que me explotaba la cabeza, sentia como si todo el mundo no se cahía encima.

Me sentia solo en este mundo, sentia como si se me saliera el corazón, sentia que me picaba el cuerpo, y que se me salia el alma. Saben que? Se me vio un pensamiento de Dios y dije, "Dios es el único que puede ayudarme, no hay nadie más." Saben que? Esos pensamientos se le vienen a uno cuando uno más lo necesita y es ahí cuando uno se da cuenta de que existe un sólo Dios en esta Tierra y en este mundo. No hay nadie a quien adorar. Uno siente que es su alma, su cuerpo, su luz y esperanza. Nunca digas que hay mala suerte porque no nunca existe. A cambio Dios si existe. El algún día te cambiara. Recuerden que despues de todo con pan y agua se hizo mucho. Hay que ser conformista con lo nuestro Dios nos da. Despues para ser un gran ganador, hay que ser perdedor.

Saben quem me siento muy bien al contarles todo esto. Despues de todo, esto me salen de lo muy hondo de mi corazón. Saben que, siento que Dios está conmigo en todo los momentos y siento que nunca los desamparara. No los olvides tambien. Siempre que sientas algo y lo tienes que decir, dilo y no tengas miedo y veras que te vs a sentir mejor. Yo te lo digo.

From The Beat: Y estamos seguro que esto viene desde el fondo de tu corazón. Tienes un buen talento en expresar tus sentimientos. Que bien que nos haya pasado la vos de la salvación. Esperamos que siempre sigas sobre ese camino tan bueno qu llebas. Para los creyentes en Dios, cuando Dios existe para ellos, todo es bendición y de esa misma manera esperamos que sigas ti. Gracias por pasar la vos y el mensaje tan poderoso que nos has dado. Esperamos que esto toque los corazones de los otros.

Everything Started To Go Wrong Little By Little

The truth is that my luck has been so, so good so far, but there was a time when everything went wrong at home and at my work. There was a time when I got fired from my job, I didn't know anything about my family, I didn't know who I was, I felt my head was going to explode, and I felt that the whole world was going to jump over me.

I felt alone in this world, I felt as if my heart was going to jump out chest, my skins was itchy, and I felt I was going to loose my soul. But you know what? A thought of God appeared in my head and I said, "God is the only one who can help me, there isn't another one." You know what? Those thoughts appear to someone when you most expect it and there is when you realize that a God exist in this Earth and in this world. There isn't another thing or man to adore but Him. You can feel His soul, body, light and hope. Don't say that is was bad luck because that doesn't exist, but God does really exist. He will change you some day. Remember that after all, with just bread and water a lot was done. We have to be conformist with what God give us. To be a winner, you also have to be a looser.

You know what? I feel very good sharing this. After all, this is coming from within my heart. You know what? I think God is with me at all times and I think He will never abandon you. Don't forget it.

Whenever you feel like you want to say something and you have to say it, say it, don't be afraid and you will feel better. This I'll say.

-Elvin, San Francisco

From The Beat: We are sure that this all came from the bottom of your heart. You have a good talent in expressing your feelings. Don't loose it. On the other hand, we are happy that you've found your salvation. We hope you continue heading the same direction, God's. And for those who believe in God, God exist. Thank you for sharing such as powerful message. We hope this touches the hearts of others. Thank you again!

What Am I Here For?

Sometimes I think
What am I here for
My mom don't
Care about me
My dad don't
Care about me
So why am I
On this earth
Sometimes I feel
Like I have
No one that
Love me
Sometime I feel
Like I was made
For the money
Sometime see people wit' their
Mommamas and dad and
I just think what
If I still had a mom and dad

-Lil' Los, Alameda

From The Beat: From this beautiful, powerful poem, we'd say that even without a dad, or a mom you will still find love. Maybe it will be your woman, maybe your friends, maybe it will be the child you have one day. In the meantime, it's a challenge, because you have to rely on yourself and find other people to support you. But don't give up... this poem is a song of sorrow, but it's your song and you should be proud of it!

Who am I? Tired

I am a boy who stands for what he believes in
Some may think I'm good, some think I'm a heathen
Sometimes my pride gets me in trouble
and sometimes I get what I want
I'm not afraid to say what other people won't
I'm an underachiever but still a believer
Could have had lost of success if it wasn't for reffer
I have a wonderful mind but to many choices to make
People try to beat me down but I refuse to break
I'm very talented doing things the legal way or in the
streets
I live my life hour by hour because I might not see the
end of the week basically
I'm a good boy who's been through a lot and really has
gotten tired
Trying to be positive is like a job and I keep getting fired.

- Reggie, Land Of Enchantment

From The Beat: There is one thing that sticks out in this piece, Reggie. You say you have too many choices to make. In your eyes this may be true, but remember in life you truly only have two choices. A right choice and a wrong choice, you know the difference between the two, now it's up to you as you say time to get another job and keep it until you retire.

One Love

Brothers and sisters, youngstas and elders, life is too short and death takes too long. Be hopeful, for you must repent. Time is precious and the past is over. Be you, and not the rest. Be real with yourself and to others. Life is like a game of chess. Stay two steps ahead. Forget friends, remember yo' loved ones 'cause they hurt the most when you gone. Stay alive and jive, keep the devil away 'cause he laughs when you down. Keep yo' head up, mouth closed, heart open, nose clean, brain smart, lungs with oxygen, stay out and stay in yo' house one love.

-Tongan, Alameda

From The Beat: These are very nice words of wisdom. We're glad to hear you extend your brotherhood to the fellow Beat readers! Those are very strong and powerful words. We're glad to hear you say all these positive things. We hope that you continue to preach and teach, and continue to learn. One love!

Taking Thing For Granted

What I feel like speaking on is taking things for granted. When I was free, I never really saw everything that I appreciated until they were gone. I ended my relationship with my girl for three and half years before I was detained over some minor problems.

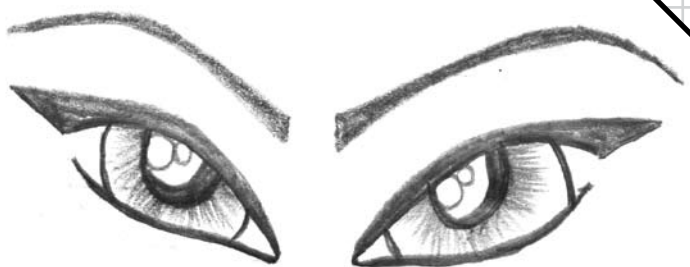
While we were together, she made every effort to try and make things work. She was a great girl, everything that was expected from a girl, but I was constantly avoiding my problems and running away from them. I neglected her and couldn't provide her my time. Now, she's fed up with giving me chances and has found somebody that can provide her the thing I couldn't. I took her for granted and now I have to accept the fact that she's with somebody that makes her happy.

Well, all good things comes to an end... A new year brings a new life. It's just hard having to deal with this while being locked up. I took my freedom for granted. I took every little leisure in life for granted. So now I must learn to appreciate everything now before it's too late.

2008... A new year brings a new life. I need to move on for now, but it's going to take some time. With every lesson learned, it'll bring experiences. Maybe later down in the future, we'll be able to work things out, but for now it's time for both of us to grow up and experience new things.

-Tommy, San Francisco

From the Beats: You have, indeed, lost a lot through your carelessness. But it's also clear to us that you have gained a lot — lessons learned from painful experience. Everyone has experiences that hurt, but not everyone learns from them. You are already growing and maturing, and it shows in every word. Thank you for this.



Letter Of Knowledge

One thing I can tell you about Juvenile Hall is that it ain't coo'. The food is nasty, the water is too hot.

Just make some choices better than the choices that got you here. Don't just tell people that your gonna do good when you get out and then end up being back in here the next week. Try to do something better with your life don't just waste it by going in and out of jail it's a waste of time. You can be on the outs taking care family going to school and working making that honest money.

The key to life is education you have it all. I promise if you go to school and get average grades you will get some where in life prove the judge and all the people doubting you wrong you can do it if you put your mind to it. Show everybody that your parents raised you right handle your business because a lot of people will give their life for their kids to get a good education and do something with life, so just think about what I said and give it a try.

-Limit, Alameda

From The Beat: This is a beautiful letter of knowledge. How can you get this message across all the youngstas? Everybody is so caught up in the latest clothes, fashion, robbing, killing and stealing. But they don't know that a negative.

Mother's Love

I thought I was me
For whom people could see
I was once someone true
Who were apart of better few
Until I turned blind
With all the crime in my mind
Yet murder seemed like the answer
To all the dreamful sins
'Cause life don't matter, all the same time
Until I saw loving mother's face, which was mine
Death swims through my mind, and the horrid faces I look into
But I know how to pass this detonation
And that's to think about the mother's love

-Bruce, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Right! And so beautifully written! Those are the one who suffer the most their kids are in bad shapes of situation like yours. Think about tomorrow and what can be better if your way of thinking were positive. Also, think about the life that 'mother's love' wants you to live...

Letter Of Knowledge

Hey beat. What's cracking? Well this is Steven! Well today I'm going to write about who I am and a letter of knowledge. Well me, I'm just a young G that lives a a tough life. Look at me 'cause I have tattoos on my face and they just see a low life, but the real me is wanting to be dead 'cause I don't like my like right now.

I been through so much in my life such as murder, suicide and I am to tell you the truth what happen in the past is going to make you who you are.

Getting beat up and beat down at the age of eight years old everyday just 'cause you're the only kid in the house. Getting beat up bad, made me a savage today cause who I am is someone that is mad at the world 'cause of the way my life is messing up.

I'm in here and the way I look at myself is like what am I doing on this earth to do? I plan to life this G life to the fullest. At the time I was thinking am I going to die in my sleep? Or I'm going to get shot six times by my homeboy. Well you want to know who I am? I'm a savage that waiting for some one to take my life away. Shhhh, you may ask why I want to die. Just like you're old to put yourself in my shoes.

Getting shot at in the leg two times in your back, getting stuck six times, seeing people kill themselves right in front of your eyes and waking up everyday to a gun shot and every time you close your eyes you see blood!

People say that they know how I feel -- too lonesome. And I left them. I stopped feeling my pain the age of eight was so I won't know how it feels to be sad or happy.

I feel mad all the time. Tell me why is that? Well people say a lot of shhhh about everyone and they don't run up. Tell me what up run up. Tell me what's up with that?

Well Beat I'm glad I get to write in The Beat 'cause you guys are going to make my time go by fast 'cause I get out soon. Well here's a letter of knowledge to everybody that's locked up in here doing time like me. Stay up and don't let yourself up for more time just 'cause people want to talk shhhh.

-Steven, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Sure your past made you who you are. The beating, the shooting, the stabbing. It made you the young man who writes to The Beat, week in week out, putting his heart and knowledge out there for us all to appreciate. If you would just reread your own work, you'd see, your painful past didn't make you a savage, it made you a teacher and an artist. Now stop talking about wanting to die, and start thinking about the miracle of the fact that you're still alive. Your pain feeds your artist's soul. Do you see it?

Nobody's Mascot

Who am I? I'm an Indian. Half Native American, half Salvadorian. Either way I'm Indian.

On the Native American side I'm a proud member of the Oglala Lakota Sioux tribe, home tribe of the great leader and warrior, Crazy Horse. On the Salvadorian side, my dad, we're called Pípil Indians. I really can't find a difference between both tribes though, to tell you the truth. Well, us Indians, we ain't lived an easy life. There's always racist remarks being said to us. That really makes us mad. I don't like the fact that we have sport teams named stuff like: The Redskins, the Chiefs, and their Indian mascots. My people and I, we're nobody's mascot. What makes it more maddening is the fact that we have no actual Indians on those teams, they're full of Tótómocs (black men) and Wasíchus (white men). But that's another topic. Well, as a child I was taught and raised to live by what we call "The Indian Way." They also taught me about my tribe's history, but that was when I was old enough to understand all that violence.

You want to know what the "Indian Way" is all about? Well, here we go, but I can only tell you about what my tribe does. I don't know if all other tribes follow the same ways. Anyways, here goes.

Well, to follow the Indian Way, you have to have and show, basically, just twelve little things. They're just twelve little things, but if they are followed they can accomplish many great things.

Now, I'm going to start naming and explaining these things.

Cantógnaké. My first lesson was that of "Cantógnaké," love. I was taught to love everything and everybody around me. Even though you may not know someone, show them love.

Wawoóhola. My second level learned was "Wawoóhola," respect. I was taught to be very quick to give respect. If you give respect, you're very sure to receive respect. To us Lakota, respect is very important. Respect shapes every moment of our life. For example, when sitting at a table, ready to eat, all youngsters must make sure that all Elders are the first ones served. If a youngster reaches out to grab something from the plates first, that is a sign of great disrespect to the Elders at the table. Disrespect does not go unpunished with us.

Cantéyuké. My third lesson learned was that of "Cantéyuké," generosity. I was taught to be very generous. My elders told me to be kind to everyone, and to "give and give until you can give no more. I remember a story one of my elders told me. It was about generosity, giving, and kindness. That story shall be revealed in the next issue.

-Yogi Bear, Alameda

From The Beat: Your heritage is one full of tragic loss, and we now that America owes a debt of shame to the people whose land we took. But it's powerful to see how strong your sense of pride is, and your faith in the ancient principles that have made your people strong. Do you, personally, always achieve living these principles? If not, what gets in the way? We don't mean the outside obstacles that come from an unjust society, we mean the inside obstacles that you, Yogi, put in front of yourself. In the meantime, thank you for this beautiful piece, and we look forward to part 2.

Well, to follow the Indian Way, you have to have and show, basically, just twelve little things. They're just twelve little things, but if they are followed they can accomplish many great things.

Who I Am -- Beyond

Beyond the shoes I sport. Beyond the Dickies I wear. Beyond the way I talk, the way I move, there's a side that most people don't see. When they already start talking I haven't even said a word and already have a story of how they think I live. They think that all gangsters are up to no good and all we are good is to commit crimes and stupidity.

But who am I? Let me tell you, I have thoughts to have dreams and goals I want follow. I want to graduate, have a high school diploma because, no matter what people, I think education is first on my mind.

People think just because I get into trouble I am a bad person wrong. I am here to say that I am a cool person. Lots of respect if someone is in need of help. I'm always there to put out a hand. Shhh I'll throw both hands and feet as long as it can make them cheer up.

I'm always there for my loved ones and I try my best to make things right. If people take the time to get to know me, they would see a different me.

My race, my culture, my about is up to me as a brown prider. I stand strong so before you walk and ask you self "who am I?"

Stay up homies in the hall. We will be out soon.

-Lefty, Santa Clara

From The Beat: If all people thought the way you think, this world would be a different one. Peace and harmony would king this world. Get your education done, because it will open so many doors in the future that can make your life easier and happier. What about getting out of the gang for second step after graduation. Think about it! Thank you for your words, now live them!

Visiting Day

I was born on September 24. If you read this, this is me I would like to say of this: At the age of 15 no kid, no kid should have been through the shhh I've been through.

I heard kids get mad over a visit they did not get or a letter they haven't received. Well, let me tell you I've been incarcerated for roughly over eight months, five months in San Joaquin and now in Alameda County. I haven't received a single phone call saying "Momo, you have a visit."

I would sit on my cell I would think if somebody would come to visit me, would they believe them or let them go home. I sit and look out of my window, and I see about people in they rooms, but me I kill time by stealing gloves, making a balloon to play with. That is how I kill time in visiting

Saturday and Sunday I pretty much do anything to keep myself busy, but it drives me crazy. By Sunday all my things have been already taken out.

I even recall a kid killing himself because he didn't get a visit. Shhh in my shoes he would have been dead 'cause he would have missed a whole lot of visits.

-Momo, Alameda

From The Beat: It's heartbreaking to imagine you alone on the weekends. As much as you can, try to use that time writing (we'd publish your life story in a heartbeat if you would write it, you have been through enough to fill a book, that's for sure), or reading, or studying, because the only way to beat this loneliness will be to succeed when you get out, so you can meet people, good people, who will have your back. No one should be this alone - now you have a new reason to fight for your freedom.

Snap

When I close my eyes I go to a place far far away from cages.
 People reality from Juvenile Hall,
 I'm in a place where you can't be killed a place fit for a king.
 A place where you don't think about nothing evil or bad.
 A place where the lakes and rivers really are milk and honey.
 Where beautiful women are everywhere .
 My grandma young in great health and my family all around is safe and sound.
 Instead of being in the town where people just want guns and money and women.
 In my sacred mental palace, we'll have a good time.
 But when things almost get to the climax ...snap! Back to reality in a single cell
 Instead of heaven, hell -- woken up by the noise of a staff checking up on me in my cell. Beep beep beep.

-Jamil, Alameda

From The Beat: It's the power of your imagination that helps you daydream your way out of lockdown, but that same imagination is also what you can use to will yourself out of the pain and death on the streets. Imagine a future for yourself, the one you want. And then sit down and ask yourself how to get it. Will you apply for a four year college? Hook up with a mentoring program? Try to get a tutor for school? Try to get a fulltime job? Imagination is the first step. Courage is the second!

I'm Sorry Dad

I'm sorry Dad for the shhh I've done
 I'm sorry Dad for living on the run
 I'm sorry Dad for dropping out of school
 I'm sorry Dad for acting like a fool
 I'm sorry Dad for causing all this pain
 I'm sorry Dad for driving you insane
 I'm sorry Dad for wanting you to die
 I'm sorry Dad for every time I cried
 I'm sorry Dad for being your damn son
 I'm sorry Dad for the times we had fun
 I'm sorry Dad for the times you hit me
 I'm sorry Dad for the times you whipped me
 I'm sorry Dad for paying all the bills
 I'm sorry Dad for making money off drug deals
 I'm sorry Dad for that you had it bad
 I'm sorry Dad for the times I got stabbed
 I'm sorry Dad for every time you were drunk
 I'm sorry Dad that you never gave a funk
 I'm sorry Dad for telling you the truth
 I wasn't the failure - dad it was you.

-Sneeks, Santa Clara

From the Beats: This poem must have been painful to write. There's so much love there, but so much disappointment. The thing is, no matter what you have been through with your dad, your life is your own, now. He may be responsible for your past and your childhood, but as you step into manhood, you can decide... do you intend to be like him? Or are you reaching towards a higher goal, a different way of being an adult?

Dear Mama

This poem is to everyone that thinks they
 Been though everything I've been through

 I once had a mom that was down for me
 Until she met this dude. Before she met him she told me
 that
 She would never choose a dude over me

 'Till she met this dude she slowly started changing on
 me
 'Till that one day were we started fight
 Ever since that day she started changing on me

 Slowly she started pushing me away
 'Till finally she kicked me out and told me
 That from now on when I see her I'm dead to her

 So I moved out and went to my grandma's house
 To stay with her from a couple of days
 Now I'm on the way to getting my own place so by the
 time
 I get out in "March." I'll have my own place and my own
 job
 So I won't have to worry about staying with anybody

 I'll be living by myself. I'll be independent.

-Lil' Carlos, Alameda

From The Beat: This poem is hard to read - you have been forced to 'man up' at a young age, and we're sorry that your mother's mind and heart have been so broken that she is unable to be a mother to you in the way that you deserve. One day we hope you forgive her for the mistakes she is making now (we are sure she will regret them, deeply). As for independence - yes, you are going to have to figure out a way and place to live. When do you turn 18? Are there other family members you can stay with? Do you plan to go to college? Get a job? Tell us more!

Candy Store

When I was younger -- personally I don't remember, I think I was about the age of two or three, some one in my family had left the door open. My dad, my uncle, and my auntie were playing dominos and my older brothers were somewhere upstairs.

While the door was open, I had managed to walk outside about two or three blocks from my house to the candy store!

How is a two-year-old walk three blocks --oh! With out a diaper -- without anybody, including my family not noticing?

From what my mom tells me, when she got home from work she asked my family where I was and nobody knew.

She says that she was panicking and cursing everybody out, until the lady from the store called and told my mom that I was there. The lady from the store was known to my family, because we always went to her store. But the store owner had called and told my mom that I walked in the store and started eating all her candy, so she picked me up and sat me on the counter and gotten home luckily she just gotten home.

-Larche, Alameda

From The Beat: This is piece is funny and sad at the same time, funny because you wrote it so well that we could see it all happening, and even picture you perched on the counter, but sad because your poor mom must have been out of her mind with worry. Plus, she has to watch you and the rest of your family too. Is it a lot of people in your house? Who watches over you now? Do you have younger siblings you need to watch over?

I once had a mom that was down for me

Five P's and an S - Why I'm here

Pearls-Is something that's like a drug, 'cause I'm highly addicted. Why, I don't know, but it's like I gotta have it, so I keep it around me at mostly all times possible. But in a way that's not cool.

Powder-Now that's a problems I have very badly I mean I cant stop selling it well really coke but it's a p so I keeping it movin' but bein' black, dreadlocks, and a street mentality so no type of business so I would show the younger generation something new.

Pistol- Man let's not get on this subject I got three charges with these thangs and getting caught and charged. Now them judges ain't playin with shhh like that so I quit and I wash my hands.

Purple-now everybody and they mommy be on it so I mean its cool to blow no and again 'cause it's relaxing, but don't mix it to much with a whole bunch shhh. But bra you know what it is.

Pills-now when I'm on a them, I gotta have my boo there next to me like Wayne get my grown man on with her 'cause I'm on in the zone...whole bottles of Petrone, and I'm gone.

Syrup-now I got my medicine, so I'm cool, but without it I'm a damn fool so now I'm cool.

-Lil' Solid, Alameda

From The Beat: How's this for five p's and an S. Pain, prison, police, pallbearers, probation officers, and an S for sadness... because that's the path you chose so far. Power, potential, professional, poetry, programs and SUCCESS. That's the path you deserve.

I Am Not A Criminal

I am Mexican. I am not a criminal.

I am artistic, funny, and hyper. This is my first time ever getting caught up for anything and it will also be my last. I am a skilled writer, a break dancer (bboy).

I am easy to get along with I am known as "Retro" but only my friends call me that, nobody else or I get mad. I was born in Newark, CA some of the staff are stereotypical. The other day I was accused of writing a gang name on the wall because I'm a Mexican from Newark.

-Retro, Alameda

From The Beat: Stay with the positive because you've got a lot of it, and holding onto that will help you stay away from the negativity in your neighborhood. In the meantime, don't trip off of stereotyping, that's someone else's baggage - your life and dreams are too important to let yourself get sidetracked by other people's ignorance.

You Can't Wish Back The Dead

(This is in response to a Beat facilitator's question: If you could have three wishes, what would they be?)

Why makes wishes? You can't wish back the dead.

Because I am good as far as materialistic... I am koo'. But emotionally I am hurt because I miss my grandma, and also my brah Mikal died too young.

My dad died with his back turned.

See me all I wish is for us to be together again, but that's not gon' happen because I refuse to die young. I remember him he was the best he always did what he had to do.

Now that he died that's too bad, and just keep it pushin' but am gon' be da best so ain't bout to go around wishing for shhh. I'm gone just be Majia Go Baby -- and don't take off da "go baby"!

-Majia Go Baby, Alameda

From The Beat: You're right... in this cold world, wishing just isn't enough. It's not about wishing for what you can't have, it's about striving for what you CAN have. Thanks for pointing this out, and being the teacher, again. Now tell us what you plan to strive for.

Ghetto State Of Mind

The life I live is violent, killers, hustlers, playas, and innocent bystanders,
But this is how I choose to live. Sitting on my block getting money,

Being a negative role model for little kids, why did I choose the way I live?

Because I wanted to be thug all my life,
And supply rocks for dope friends and pipes?

Or is it that I'm trapped in a cage
Filled with rage, ready to flip the page and go into that savage phase I cant call it,

Young cats killing each other over drugs and turfs,
Trying to see a meal ticket,

I know my family does not want to pick up my casket,
Living this life they'll be forced to pick it,
Sometimes when I sleep at night I have dreams that my life is coming to an end,

You might call these nightmares to me there are dreams,
Maybe because it comes with a package,

This life is all hood caskets are all wood,

This life is too much for me,

To much killing to much crime,

To many killing their own people for a dime,
Too many ladies not knowing who the baby daddy is,

Because they didn't trip off who they was with,

Before they handle they bizz,

Too many little kids growing up without their fathers,

Because they so called father ran out,

Because he couldn't handle the responsibility,

But technically that's how the game goes,

When you living this ghetto life,

With the struggle in strife,

War you got to fight to win over rights,

Cause in this life their ain't nothing free,

The poor stay poor, the rich get more chips,

And dope dealers live ghetto fabulous,

With all the baddest chicks,

But now me personally I'm through with this life of crime,

But can't nobody change my ghetto state of mind.

-Gonzo, Alameda

From The Beat: It's people like you, the ones that are true to where they came from, but abandon all the evil parts of it, that are the greatest source of hope. If you mean it, if you truly leave the old mistakes behind, you can come back to the ghetto one day as a leader, and example, a bringer of hope. But first you have to live up to the talent and conviction of your pieces... you have to quit drinking, for real, leave the gang life that turns brothers against brothers behind, and learn to ignore the voices that might tempt you to do wrong. We want another poem from you now, one that tells us how you will make these real-life changes!

Chances Wasted

I had so many chances

But most of them wasted

I get so close to the cake

I can almost taste it

Making money was so cool

If you can handle the chase

You can funk up like me

Or you can stick to the basic

Cause nine outta ten times

We take our chances and waste it

But what's the point of that

When you can take 'em, and make it

-Keenan, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Now that you've seen the evils of that 9 out of 10, are you ready to be the one out of ten who sees the chance and takes it, and runs with it and makes his life better because of it? Judging by the skill and insight of this poem, we bet you have it in you to be the one in ten success!

I Am Who I am

The way I am, the judge, police, DA think I'm a thug because they see me as a target for a gang involvement. But they really don't know anything. I am a young Asian man just trying to survive in the tough neighborhood downtown. They assume they know what I bang because the attire I wear: chucks, dicks and a hoodie with a beanie.

All because I wear these type of clothes, they stop and interrogate me about who I hang out with. Then they ask me if I am a banger. Then they ask me is it okay to take a picture of me and send it to the GTF, aka Gang Task Force. And then they label me gang affiliated. This gives the GTF more of a reason to stop me when they see me in the streets.

Well, Beat. that's all I got to talk about.

-Lil' Rob, San Francisco

From The Beat: We admire the way you put down the sequence of events that lead the GTF to consider you a gang member. Are you telling us, though, that the GTF is wrong about you? Are you saying you dress in a certain way, but that you aren't affiliated? What would be interesting to us is for you to explain, first, what "trying to survive" in your neighborhood requires you to do, and second, whether you can think of other means of survival that don't risk becoming a slave in the county's kiddie jail...

A Strong African-American Male

I am a young, black strong African-American male. I'm a man of wisdom that's trying to achieve my goals. Trying to overcome and survive this cold nasty world. I'm a young lion in the zoo looking for prey. That's the only way I can eat!

Who am I? I'm a young philosopher that's putting my mind to work. I'm courageous, responsible. I'm a young soldier in this war that's determined, done with preparation and ready to fight. I'm a vicious pit bull ready to bite. Some say I'm cool, rugged, dangerous and uncontrollable, calm, courteous, motivated, really to perpetual.

Who am I? That young guy, aggressive and fly, living in San Francisco. I really care if I live or die. Some don't. Some won't. But I'm a healthy young man, so I don't need to smoke.

I'm out beat.

-Monyea, San Francisco

From The Beat: There is much we admire in this piece ("... a man of wisdom trying to achieve my goals") and much we don't admire in this piece ("... a vicious pit bull ready to bite.") To be honest, when we read this, we're not sure who you are or who (and what) you want to be. That young lion in the zoo can look for prey all day long, but he has to depend on his keepers to feed him. We'd love for you to tell us where you hope to be in five or ten years, and what your plan for getting there is. There is no doubt at all that you are intelligent and have the ability to move you out of here and into a brighter future, but we can't tell if that's your goal. So fill in the blanks for us, and give us a clearer picture of this "young philosopher that's putting (his) mind to work."

Fabulous Funny Baby Stories

The funniest baby story that I can remember is that when I was young, I had the chicken pox, and my grandma came in and started screaming. She thought I had colored my face with a color crayon.

When I was young going to church, I got up in the middle of the church and kissed this girl and everyone was laughing.

But now, ain't no more baby stories. Now you have turned into a adult.

-D-Gotti

From The Beat: We like both your funny stories, although we wish you had given us more details about them. All we can say is, now that you have turned into an adult, maybe you should think about going back to church.

Letter Of Knowledge

Man, my letter of knowledge would tell you don't get in the same position I'm in right now. I can't walk five feet without permission. Since I'm out my box, I can't even go to the bathroom if I just had to and I had to run 'cause I was going to piss or shit on myself. I got to get permission. Since I'm out my box I can't even go to the bathroom if I just had to and I had to run 'cause I was going to piss or shhh on myself. I got to get permission to get some water and water is free.

When you locked up, you can't even see your family if they wanted to come see you. I'm stuck around dudes 24/7, and I see females one to two times a day for like 30 seconds at most. Can't talk to them 'cause the staff going to hate (but I still talk to the females on da unda).

But we get hygiene bags to keep up wit' ourselves. But then they take them after they give it to you for like 15 minutes in the morning and after showers at night. We can't leave our rooms 'cause you got to buzz the door from the control panel.

At first I could see the back out the windows, but I can't now 'cause they blocked up the windows, so now I can't see. When we supposed to get rec., we stayed getting played. We supposed to come out, but when it certain staff here, they see it like this, "I don't care if these young punks come out they rooms 'cause we get paid no matter what. It makes our job easier if we don't bring them out."

And if you get on the staff 'cause they did something wrong and they know it, they can give you room time 'cause they can, and they hold the keys. Basically saying, long story short, don't go to jail 'cause if you from the weak hearts and weak spirits, this bs might break you down. But for me, I'm living this bs day by day until I touch down.

-Gold M, San Francisco

From The Beat: We hope some youngsters who haven't been subjected to this experience yet read and appreciate what you have to say and what you have learned about giving up your freedom to this system. Freedom is a very precious gift, and what we admire about you, Gold, is that it didn't take you long to realize just how precious a gift it is, and just how much you want to hold onto it! The only way to keep moving forward is to keep yourself out of the hands of the system, and that's exactly what we expect you will do.

Confined

I am confined to a bland land.
 The sky here is heavy on my head,
 like sand. Unworthy authorities
 have the upper hand.

But a day will come
 when I get to go back
 to where I'm from.

'Till then I have to move on
 to an even more pointless life –
 a cap and a gown of the ultimate clown,
 ignorantly equipped with a knife.
 On the yard I get lyrically beaten down
 and robbed of my crown.

Down on the ground
 my eyes are peeled
 for the much anticipated day
 when freedom is revealed
 and the unworthy authority,
 of my own making,
 finally finds that my fate
 is free for the taking.

-Jackson, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: Free for the taking, and without a knife. We don't know where that knife came from. It seemed to just drop into the poem. Toss it out. Regain your crown.

Day In, Day Out

My life ain't nothing new. Day in and day out I'm in the halls. Waking up from a hot and sweaty dream about my life being takin' by bullet. Day in and day out.

Yeah, I be gettin' out of the halls, but what do I do? I come right back for all the same thing, tryin' to be something I'm not, tryin' to be all big and bad at the times I don't need to.

Yeah, people ask me, "When are you going to get yourself together?" I always tell them the same thing, I'm going to do this and I'm going to do that. I start to do it for a month or so, but then go back to my old self. Day in and day out.

What I'm I going to do next? I laugh, I giggle when nothing funny just to try to keep my cool. Up in these halls just are getting me sick and sicker. See the same people over and over judging you.

But now its 2008 and it's time to make a difference for me. Not my dad, not my aunt, not my uncle, not my boyfriend, but me! Time to see myself as a new person and not the one that keep coming back to the halls day in and day out. It's time for me.

-Rina, San Francisco

From The Beat: Oh, you are so right, Rina! It is time for you to make those difficult choices that will make your future so much brighter than your past. As you say, you owe it to yourself, and nobody else, to make this happen. The hardest thing of all on the outs is saying "No" to people (homies, crimies, family) who don't want to hear it, even when you know it's the right thing to say. But just remember that by going along, you end up in a system that doesn't change, day in and day out...

Regrets

Man, I'm back in the halls again. I told myself I wasn't gonna come back, but I slipped on my home pass. It was New Years and I had too much to drink, and I made a HUGE mistake. I pulled a gun on two elder guys for talking hella shh to my girl. I'm being charged for two armed robberies when I didn't even take nothing from them. They willing started to empty their pockets, I didn't even take any of their stuff. The whole point was to scare these grown men for talking shh to a seventeen year old girl. One of the guys pissed in their pants and was close to crying. It's funny how you can go from talking shh to a girl, to pissing on yourself and crying like one. The whole situation made me a changed person. It was a life changing experience.

I'm done with this lifestyle, on the real. They're talking about CYA.

If I get another chance, I'll be a whole new person. The messed up part about all of this is that I was at the bus stop waiting to catch the bus and sell the gun to a friend. I've been getting rid of everything that could get me in trouble. I was actually turning my life around, and this one mistake threw all my hard work away. If I do get another opportunity, I'm gonna push myself to be a great role model for other people struggling in the system. I got a lot of potential, and I'm ready to use it.

For all you new kids locked up, step your game up and stop while you're ahead. The system is a vicious trap that's very hard to get out of. For real, don't come back. Get out and stay out. Learn from your mistakes and others. Well, I'm done bothering you. Ya'll stay up and keep it solid.

-Jake, Alameda

From The Beat: All it takes is one mistake and it's a wrap! Now you must face the consequence of your actions. But we're glad to hear that you're ready to turn your life around. All that hard work isn't thrown away. You just have to strive harder now. All these obstacles are only gonna make you a stronger man. It's not gonna be easy but you have the determination and the heart to change your life. No matter where you end up, stay positive and positive things will come.

Not As Grown Up As I Thought

Well, what's up? My name is Deprece. First time I say my name on da Beat. But yeah, people know me as La Colombiana or La Negra. Para los que me conocen (for those who know me), you know what's up. But yeah, I lived on ma own for about two years. And it's been a good cool-ass time. But at the same time, its not and it haven't been dat easy. Work, work, work.

It's hard to live on your own and think you know it all. In one city, you a kid and dat's what people know you as. And in another city, people know you as an adult.

I'm independent and dat's hard when you a young female especially... So yeah, I used to work legal, you know. I thought I was an adult already and dat I knew it all.

So, when I lost my job, I had forgot to live my kid life and went on thinking I was old. But yeah, den I needed to pay my bills, da rent, my cell phone. And da only other thing I knew how to do was sell drug. So what I did was go to da street, started doin' what I knew how to do best.

After a couple of months, I ended up goin' just to pick my cell phone from ma friend and I ended up gettin' caught up for a warrant I had den. Now I'm goin' to go to Colorado.

But da whole meaning of why I'm telling you dis story is because even though I haven't learn my lesson, but it's hard you know. It's not always good to think you know it all and act older than your age. Always try to listen to your parents and do good.

-Negra, San Francisco

From The Beat: We admire you for writing this long and thoughtful piece. And, for the most part, we think you're teaching a very important lesson, which is that being independent is not easy, and you should enjoy your childhood for as long as you can. On the other hand, we're not inspired by reading that you haven't learned your lesson... Why is that? You said selling drugs is what you "knew how to do best," but we don't believe that for a second (and, given where you are and where you're going, we don't think you should believe it, either). We hope you go to Colorado knowing that there is still much to learn (which is always true for all of us all the time), and that you come back more prepared to be an independent adult than now. Good luck.

Just Got Busted

Sitting at school during lunch doing what I do

Ran across a shorty that was kinda cute

I want to holler at her, but can't get caught slipping by my boo

Finally got enough balls to talk to the girl

Bad little thing, wanted to give her the world, let her sit on my lap

Not knowing my boo had seen,

when she saw that she ran and got her girls

Private eye team

I took shorty to her house

My girl creeping right behind, trying to get her clothes off so I start spitting lines

Me an her doing the nasty

I forgot to lock the door,

my girl busts in and her first word was "whore!"

I got up and ran out of the house I didn't know what to say

That was her best friend but I didn't find out until the next day

She asked what I was doing

I told her the truth I was cheating,

then she said I wanted to see if you was me

And my girl planned this last weekend for me.

- Reggie, Land Of Enchantment

From The Beat: Relationships are based on one major factor, Trust. There are many more factors to consider in a relationship, but trust is one of the main ones. With out trust most if not all relationships end with a separation sooner or later. It's all about trust.

A Pain I'll Never Forget

It all started when I was five years old sitting in my living room watching TV waiting for my mom to take me to school and my dad comes out of his room and says "where is it?" and I tell him "where's what dad?"

And out of nowhere he kicks me in my ribs. I was in pain that day I'll never forget, that's when I started getting in group homes, living in shelters, and from this day in and out of group homes, my mom and my little sister are always worried. Well that's it for now.

-Niko, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Your dad messed up, no doubt about it. And if you think about how small a five year old boy actually is, it's a trip to even think that someone could hurt them that way. We're sorry for the pain you've been through. Now that you're coming on manhood yourself though, it's time to stop hurting yourself by messing up. You deserve better than what you got from your dad, and better than what you've been giving yourself since then. Can you break the cycle?

What You Think

You see me I don't give a damn of what you think,
 all you care about is what is written,
 and you think, all this paperwork just determines who I
 be,
 but ya'll don't realize I am thinking differently.
 But ya'll don't want to sit around and converse with
 me,
 just because the visuals and paperwork you see,
 but I don't really trip 'cause I know who I be,
 I'm a person with a purpose. But I'm sittin' in juvie.

- Big Keno, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Wow, what a piece. It really speaks to people outside juvenile hall to really think beyond the label we put on people in detention. It seems like you're determined to push beyond the stereotypes and low expectations people have of you. What will you do to accomplish that? While we're not sure what your situation is Big Keno, while it's true that right now you're sitting in juvenile hall, it's also important to remember that you may not always be there.

Reborn

What's up Beat? I'm on this new program called restrictive because I messed up. I can't be there, so I'm going to write a little something about who or what type of person I would like to be or who would I want to be reborn into.

Sorry if it's off topic. If I were to be able to choose (when I die) who or what I would like to be reborn into, it would be a tribal man.

Why a tribal man? Here, I'll tell you why. I feel that in our society, we always try to find the meaning of life. We feel lost depressed, confused, we have so many problems and we destroy the Earth with our activities.

In a trail system, everything they do is spiritual whenever they hunt is spiritual. The youngsters go with the elders to learn, them who sincerely and deeply want to teach the youngsters. At school, there are teachers with passion but there a lot that lack passion. The survival of the next generation of the tribe depends on those young men for food.

Beat I don't want to keep going, but I think that the tribal system is the best way to live. Linking according to the laws of nature meaning to life. Well Beat, this was weak; I could have done better but yeah. I want to be reborn into a tribe.

-Viet Tiger, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Never apologize for going off-topic, especially when the topics you choose are so thought-provoking. A lot of people would agree with you. When you're in a 'tribe', like you say, the whole community is committed to each other. Americas are often lonely, because they're so separated from each other, even when they're on a crowded train. Back to your writing, do you think that if we all put an effort to make things different, things could be different? How? What can we do?

Why Would I Cheat...

Everyday you claimed I lied
 while I sat by and watched
 our love die, buried by the
 accusations, spoiled by flirtations,
 you couldn't accept that
 I loved you and never wanted
 to hurt you, but believed your
 own guilt and decided I was
 playing you. So you took your
 false information and turned
 it into rapid revenge, to go
 be with another, not knowing
 that you were my only love,
 that I assumed you were
 faithful to the end. But now
 that there is no more trust I have
 for you. So just be glad that we
 ain't through. Because your past
 made you blind. You knew the love
 I had for you so why would I
 go and cheat on you?

-Lil' Sapita, Santa Clara

From the Beat: This is a really sad poem, especially since you shared with us the stories about your boyfriend's insecurity. Insecure people often lash out and hurt more than people who are sure in themselves.

My Life

It all started when I was five years old. I was sitting in my living room watching T-V waiting for my mom to take me to school and my dad comes out of his room and says, "where is it" to me, and I said, "where's what dad?" Then, out of nowhere, my dad kicked me in the ribs and I was in pain.

That day I'll never forget. That's when I began getting into group homes and shelters. And to this day I'm still in and out of group homes. My mom and sister are worried. That's it for now.

-Niko, Santa Clara

From The Beat: This is a sad story Niko. We don't know enough about your life to be giving you any easy advice. Have you told the whole story to your counselors? We also hope your mom and sister are safe.

Caught Cheating

I was dating this guy Javier for a few months. Then my ex Omar starting coming around. He was my first love. My first everything. My first time drinking, smoking, having sex, ect... I was head over heels over this guy.

So, I started to be extremely mean to Javier. I treated him like dirt and at the same time, I was hooking up with my Omar. I made Javier cry over everything and all I did was laugh. I felt no remorse, all that mattered was Omar, no one else.

Well, I found out I was pregnant. I told Javier and just knew it wasn't his. So, he left me. I told Omar and he told me that it's not his. And that if it was that he wasn't ready. He told me to kill it. I never heard from Omar again. But on the other hand, Javier came over throughout my pregnancy and he held my tummy and said "I wish it was mine." I knew right then I made a mistake. I had a guy who I've been looking for and all I did was push him away for some garbage. I feel like that was my punishment for cheating.

-Vanessa, Santa Clara

From The Beat: This is quite a story - it almost sounds like a movie or a soap opera or something, with the evil ex boyfriend and the angelic new guy. It seems like Javier is still into you and that maybe you should work on being with him as you work on bettering your life.

Eulogy From The Departing

Well Beat I'm finally leaving, I'm off to YA. I won't be in here next time. You guys come in most likely. But tomorrow I'm going to graduate high school, which is the only reason they haven't moved me yet.

My letter of knowledge for everybody is just to take care of business. You know the things you should and shouldn't be doing. Don't let others tell you what they are. You are the only one that knows what is right for you. This is the wisdom that comes within. Don't succumb to peer pressure, I will try to write to The Beat Without, but for now our ways must part: so to both Beaters and Beat in alike, good luck, good luck in your lives, and don't forget to laugh and enjoy your time here.

-Monk, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Thank you for your wisdom. We are very sure that after this step, the next one will be greater, and the other one much greater. Do your time, and use it to learn as much as you can, so you can share it with those who need it. Knowledge is something valuable to have. The more you get, the better it is. And there is a page just waiting for you in The BWO.

Chances

Well Beat, it's Peanut once again, well I got a flow for today's topic about how many chances. It's a little something...

As I sit in this place I think were did I go wrong
 I been here too many times and too damn long
 I get out come, back in, get out and come back in again
 I stop to ask God will this end.

I been down too long
 And each days the same, its like a repeated song it goes on and on

The mornings keep coming up and the nights keep falling
 No results, no changes,
 Court dates still pop up
 Different dates continues to mark each day that slowly passes by
 I started to lose pages of the calendar 'cause of all this stress

I just want one answer from the Man above us all
 Why haven't they prosecuted my case and sent me on my journey of misery?

I don't think I could take this any more
 This sucks, I hate my life, it's not fun without freedom.

-Randy, Santa Clara

From the Beat: That last line pretty much sums up the entire human condition. No, life isn't fun without freedom. The soul needs it as much as the body needs air. So why do so many young people throw that freedom away? You have real talent as a poet - will you write a flow that tries to explain this mystery?

Anyone There

Anyone there to love and to care

It feels like I'm bare

No love from anywhere

You say you care but it feels like you don't

I just need your love and a caring hug

Someone to show me what's love

Is anyone there to show they care

My friend's love is rear

And my family's never there

I just need someone to care

Is anyone there

-Mook, San Francisco

From The Beat: We hope you find the love your tight poem says that you're looking for. But first, we hope you find love for yourself - which means a way to live in freedom and health without having to look over your shoulder...

Too Much Confusion

I'm confused right now about a lot of shhh, like baby mama drama, family drama, streets drama, and my drama. Right now I am in a position where I don't know what to do.

I tried to get my life straight but it's hard to tell you the truth. I ain't never thought I would have so much to deal with I mean I deal with a lot.

My mama passed in 2004 ,my grandpa gone in '07. Me getting shot at.

I'm thinking about my cousin that got popped on the 9th of this month January 2008.

And then it's my baby mama. Right now I'm just finding a way to see my daughter again. I miss her so much. Every time I think about her I shed a tear. I know that they say real ninjas don't cry, but they is wrong. I cant stand it from being away from my daughter.

Thinking about this right now just making me light weight mad right now, so I'm this.

-Lil' Rondale, Alameda

From The Beat: We admire you for stepping up and being real each week. You do have a lot of confusion and stress in your life, and that's real too ... it must feel like too much for one man to handle sometimes, maybe that's why you run the streets - easier to face a bullet sometimes than the pain inside. But now you're at a crossroads, because you have this precious life depending on her daddy, waiting for him to get his life together so he can step back in hers. There are all sorts of programs out there that can help you get your life straight. But you have to really really want it. Do you?

Young And Black

Who am I?

I am a young black male

locked up in this institution that they call jail.

But to me and some other people call it hell,

We call it hell because the way that they treat us

The food that they feed us,

If it wasn't against the law they would probably beat us

Have us in shackles like if we were slaves,

This institution that I'm in you have to be brave,

Because only the strong survive

Like the song say I will survive,

But you can't only survive you gots to move mean,

'Cause where I'm from the little ninjas might carry a gun with a beam

And knock down your whole team,

'Cause where I'm from white people like to stereotype

'Cause I'm black, young and I don't have my pants tight

They sag so low you can see my draws,

So they predicted that I was going to come in these walls and be locked up.

This is not just a song this is how I feel, where I'm from we call it keepin' it real

I'm from the hood where you have people of pack to steal.

Where I'm from one of my homeboys got killed in front of his porch

...and they lit his body like a torch

So the question is how would I prove them wrong?

They want me to wear my pants tight like they a thang,

But I ain't got to do that if I have to prove them wrong.

I can just spit knowledge from out these songs.

-Lil' Mac, Alameda

From The Beat: This is an amazing flow. We wish the presidential candidates would read it so they could learn more about what it's like to be "where you're from." Now, do you believe that if you wanted to, you could live where you live but still stay positive? We ask this because you are obviously a leader, but you still have to make some real changes. We're not talking about how you wear your pants, but how you wear your mind.. yeah it's bad out there, but you don't have to go to the bad... or do you? You tell us, you're the teacher!

Damn!

Laying at home
All alone
My girl ain't home
So we can talk on the phone,
I know to cheat is wrong
But I'm all alone
And I want to talk on the phone
So I called up this girl named Natasha knowing her rep
But never thought I would get caught
Sex was my only plot
My girl is not around to stop
So I'm gonna make the bed rock
So I go over her house
Sit on the couch and getting ready to dig out
Then my phone rang with that same old ring
"You Make My Heart Sing."
So I answer, it's my girl asking if I'm home
So we can talk on the phone
I look the other girl in eye
Had to make up a lie
So I told her I was outside
No sooner then that
The girl sat on my lap
And I told her I was going to call her back
As I get in the sack
Laid her on her back
And proceeded
I would think back when I had my girl like that
As I go home
I get a call on my phone
Saying I know you wasn't home
I know you cheated
And that's where you went wrong
I don't mean to be bam
But all I can say is damn!!!

-Damn

From The Beat: Damn, why didn't you just go with yo' girl? Why did you have to go after another female? Why you do you girl dirty like that? How would you feel if she would have done it to you?

Bad Move

Man where I come from cheating is not as much of a big deal. But when I finally met my baby mama at first, I could tell you in a heartbeat I wouldn't cheat on her. But as the years went by and both of us being so young I couldn't really stay committed as I was, when the relationship first began. Don't get me wrong, I really loved my baby mama, but I'm human just like everyone else and when I had the chance to get with the "next girl" I did.

But at the same time I didn't really have no respect for the "next girl" like I did for my baby mama and basically I just used her because she did things to me that my baby mama wouldn't do. Plus I didn't have to see her or explain myself to her it basically easy so I did it. But now I'm more mature then what I was back then and I know my child and my girl deserve better than how I was treating her. So I quickly decided I wasn't gonna cheat because the "next dude" can probably take my spot. And I'm not bouta have that, straight up.

-Aaron

From The Beat: Well we live and we learn. We're not here to judge you and say this and that but it's good that you realized what you really want in life. Because whatever decision you make has to make you happy also. Just be straight up with yourself, and with your baby mama. Be real. You can't deny your actual feelings. If you want to be with her then do it, and if you don't out of respect you shouldn't be cheating on her. We're glad to hear that you're maturing though. We hope you take this time and realize what you want to do, and whatever you do stay out of trouble and take care of your child.

Cheated On!

I was cheated on before but me I think it was Karma. I had liked to play a lot of girls and I thought it was cool. Really, I had a main girl until one day I got locked up for a long time. I called her every time I got a chance too, until one day she told me that she cheated on me on Christmas day. I was hurt but when I thought about it all I could think about was Karma.

-DaShawn

From The Beat: Karma came back to bite you in the butt. But that doesn't mean that it's gonna happen to you all the time. Try staying out of jail because we don't think that any girl wants to be with a dude that be going to jail for a long time.

New Life

Me, I been in these system since I was 11 years old and now I been here so long I'm becoming immune to all of this.

Now I don't even want to live because this feels like my home now and the staff is my family.

I'm getting out on Thursday in two days. I want to get all these behind me, because I got a family. And I'm gonna use them as a motivation and my family too.

I know I will be back here but in a different way. I'll work here just same day after I get out of the Marines. I'm going next year but some day but until then.

-James

From The Beat: Well we wish you luck on your journey in life. We hope you don't come back and if you do come back we hope that you're employed with the hall or something. Stay focused and don't ever forget how valuable your freedom is.

Fabulous Funny Baby

I remember my lil' cousin.

He always do something silly and crazy.

He loves to play around with people like fighting, throwing toys at each other and he was four years old. Now he about six, but when he was four years old, he would always get hit and fall to the floor he never cry.

What I mean by that, he really don't.

He will get back up and start laughing and start playing again. He's gone be a tough guy.

-Lil' Phan

From The Beat: He already sounds like he is a tough little kid. You better make sure that kid don't follow in your footsteps. Teach him right!

Rest In Paradise

On January 13th 2006 a good friend of mine was murdered in the streets of Union City. His cousins are in a gang and he was with them that day. They were hanging out outside an apartment when a rival gang came and they started fighting each other. The other gang pulled out knives and bats so everyone started to run. Even my friend realized his cousin was left behind, he ran back by himself (un-armed) to go get him. He was stabbed and passed away after a couple of hours.

It has been two years since this happened and he still hasn't been forgotten. Rest In Paradise Nam Pham 1988-2006

-L

From The Beat: We're sorry to hear about your friend. If he wasn't part of the gang why was he hanging with them? We're not trying to say it's his fault or anything. On the contrary nobody deserves to die. But we all know if we hang with a gang, we're gonna be labeled as part of that particular gang. So don't get caught up in the drama man. You choose the path that you want to take. Don't let someone else decide your own destiny.

Caught Up Bad

Let me start off by say my name well its Raul but in the streets friends call me Rauzy. Why? I have no clue! But anyway I remember the first time I got caught up was very bad because it was between two cousins and a friend! I remember it like it was yesterday too! It was freshman year at O-High short for Oakland High!

I had met this girl. She's a senior, almost done with high school. We had one period with each other! So one day she came up two me and just gave me her number, so I call her that night, I know you 'pose to call 'till at least two days (later). But I call that night so we started to talk. I guess she had this thang for football players. I don't know why but she did! So she came to one of my games and then after the game we went back to her crib. I guess she had a place of her own.

So I guess her fine ass cousin came over that night she had been at the game too. She had told me that I knew how to ball. So she gave me her number on the under! Bam, I felt like a piece! So her cousin left, right? So Amber and I went to her room and did the grown man.

The next morning I guess her cousin had got my number out her phone so I got a phone call. I had picked up. I asked who it was. She spoke her name. She said Denise. I had all ready knew who it was. Off top, a big smile came to my face. She said she wanted to hang out with your boy! But she had a friend so I had to bring one. I had nothing but ugly friends, I guess. That's what all the girls said. So she had came to pick me up in her car.

All I had seen was a bad ass red bone one on the passenger side. She kept eyeing me for the longest. We had went to the movies and on the way back she had gave my potna her number but I took it out his phone and put it in mind! Fine ass Tonya! Tonya had got dropped off, so Denise had called and told me to come outside. I told her to come inside. She was like naw. So I come outside I guess she was feeling me. She had told me she wanted me in the car. It was all good.

-Raul

From The Beat: So what happened? How did you end up getting caught? It didn't seem like you got caught! Did you ever think about sticking with one girl? You better be practicing safe sex too! It only takes one time, and you can catch something or be a young parent. Be safe!

Strictly For The G's And No Wannabes

Why all of a sudden a lot of cats want to start gang banging? It seems like anybody can gang bang now days, some of these people ain't made for this gang bang shhhh!

I remember that my folks was tryin' to make it hard for me to bang, but I ended up making the cut. Now days we have people who really weren't accepted as gangstas in real gangs so they decide to join up and make up a name for them selves and all of a sudden they're a new gang. Really I'm against all these new- booty clicks who gang bang on the internet (myspace) and think they're hard putting in work through E-mails and shhhh!!! I'm a real "G" I do it 'cause I live it! I hate fake and new-millennium gang bangers, especially when people like mines have been established. I hope the real ones can feel it and for the fake and phony please stop gang banging! Strictly for the "G" and no wannabes!!! Remain solid!

-Gumby

From The Beat: Well if you're a real G what are you doing in Juvenile Hall? The real G's are in the State and Federal penitentiaries right now doing life! The real G's are on Deathrow. The real G's are six feet underground in a wooden box! If you's a real g that's where your life is gonna end up. In jail for life or Dead! Nobody living that life is gonna last forever. Why don't you ask 2Pac? You can't 'cause he dead too.

Cheating

A girl never cheated on me. I never been caught cheating because I tell the girl that I've been talking to another female and if they don't like it then who cares.

-Shonte

From The Beat: What would happen if you did get cheated on? How would you feel?

I'm About

I'm about getting out
I'm about doing right
I'm about my money

I'm about what I be talking about,
You feel me? Get it or get disrespected
Or else you gone get walked on the real!

-Lil' J

From The Beat: What about being about staying out of jail. Everybody wants to get out but nobody wants to stay out. Why is that?

Since She Been Away

I sit and think of all that has past
The pain don't leave but forever last
Feeling like a well structured cast
I know I will never forget

The time I spent with you, I'll never forget
I wish I could go back in time

To see you
To hug you
To kiss you
To hold you

To make up what was lost even when you were mine
Now that you're gone, I feel weak inside

My muscles tense up
My mind is chemically unbalanced
My feelings seem to take over mentally physically
emotionally Scared of what my future holds without you here

I'm brought to think long lasting tears
As all I feel I can do is hide
I miss you girl

-Miogeei

From The Beat: That's a nice poem. Who did you write it for? If you miss her and love her so much why are you wasting your time in jail? You should be free pursuing the love that you miss so much.

Bad Little Kid

Well Beat gave me the question do you have any funny baby stories, and I don't.

The only kind of funny stories I know are ones that my mom told me about, and they're about me when I was really little. My mom told me that when I was little she worked in the night, and when she got home I would just wait for her to go to sleep and when she was asleep I would hit the streets. Then every time my mom woke up she would be terrified 'cause she couldn't find me, but after a while she would always go outside and catch me doing something bad.

When my mom was done telling me the story she told me something that made me laugh for some strange reason, she told me that I've been a troublemaker since day one!

-Gilberto

From The Beat: Everyone has mischievous stories about themselves when they're little and growing up. Even now you're still mischievous. But sooner or later you're going to have to outgrow all this. Coming to jail is not fun!

Ever Since

Ever since I lost my first love I didn't respect every girl as I did before. I cheated on her once.

The first time I got locked up my first love didn't wait for me. I found another love.

My true love she actually waited for me. These true loves I found waited for me twice. This time it's her third and now she's having my baby. So when I come out I'm gonna be a Dad and take care of my girl Karen and my baby.

-Miogeei

From The Beat: Congratulations! We wish you the best. We're glad to hear that you found true love and that's you're going be a dad now. We hope that you get it together and stay out of trouble so you can help raise your child.

I Am

I am a great person but because I am in the hall people think that I'm a bad person. But I really go to church and worship God. I am in the hall for the stupidest reason. I don't do any sort of crime for me to be in here. All I do every day is kick it at home I go in the computer, and hangout with my girlfriend.

-Anthony

From the beat: We don't think you're a bad person. Matter of fact, just because you're in the halls doesn't mean that we judge you cause of that. Maybe other people do but we don't. So don't let what other people think bother you. Just be yourself and hopefully this will be over soon, and you can go on with your regular life.

Who Am I?

I am a person who takes care of my family and that's locked up in Juvenile Hall for another person. Who am I?

-Sergio

From The Beat: Why are you here for another person? Why didn't the other person get arrested? You should really watch out who you associate with. You don't wanna be stuck in here doing time for somebody who don't even care about you.

Knowledge

What's up Beat? This Ronald. I'm in here for some real shh. But now that I think about it wasn't worth it.

I got some positive things like I got two good parents that do whatever for me. I do good in school and get money and be cool.

But then again I got negative stuff in my life like what I do in the streets and what I do, but I know I need to change.

So when I get out I'm gon' be cool.

Something I see occurring in today's life is a lot of killing, really over nothing. That shhh ain't cool, some all over just hating. Ninjas gone be like that they whole life and it ain't gone stop but it need to because that shhh ain't cool.

I don't believe nothing should be done because whatever I say don't matter. It ain't gon' change nothing but I think they shouldn't kill ninjas just cause they shinning harder. I'm gon' give that ninja a thumbs up and you doing yo' thang because I'm doing mine too. On the real ninja quit hating.

-Ro Ro

From The Beat: Why is there so much envy in the streets? Why can't everybody shine? Why would people go out their way just to see somebody fall? How can you make a difference in your hood? We know one person can't change everything, but imagine if everyone stopped to think about their actions before they did anything. That would affect everybody. Maybe everybody should worry more about themselves, and stop tripping off of everyone else.

Who Am I?

Who am I?

I am a African American man who's locked up but not for long.

Right now I'm in for a robbery.

I hoping to get out real soon because right now were going through a lot in court.

I'm also a football player.

-Keith

From The Beat: Why don't you stick to football? There's plenty of other ways to come up besides robbing. Don't you value your freedom? Is robbing really worth the risk of coming to jail? Think about it. you could be playing football/sports right now instead of writing The Beat.

Trapped

Trapped in this world filled wit' young stunnas and scrapers

Who will do whatever for the paper

We, don't ever think about going to jail

Over a drug sale we start so young slanging rocks out the lunch pail

Oakland the worst in the United States

Ages thirteen to thirty-four, flipping cars we don't have dreams of running for mayor

We have dreams of riding 30's on old school scrapers

The police try to capture and chase us

The D-A try to wash us and play us

I got to shine 'cause I'm the sun's best friend

If you fonk wit' the wrong click

They'll catch you and do you in

I was raised into this

My cousin's dad and uncles were grinders

I'm surrounded by lions, tigers, and apes

In this jungle of a world just to remind you I'm young

Mari

Some people get killed for running they mouth or for no reason

In Oakland we don't have summer, we call it murder season

And the ghetto is were I stay

Y'all see it on the news, I see it every day.

-Mari

From The Beat: You're trapped but you have options. It's your choice if you really want to risk your freedom just for some thirty inch rims or something. You're risking your life for materialistic things. It ain't worth it. You can have money but you can't be greedy about it. And it ain't everything. Cause money can't buy you loyalty, love, or great friends. Get yourself together and out of the system!!

Feeling Down

I'm about making my family happy, but I can't do it every time. Sometimes I slip and get caught in some bad situations. But its ok 'cause every one makes mistakes. A judge might see me as a criminal but my girlfriend and friends and family see me as a caring person that also makes mistakes.

I mean every body makes mistakes. I like to crack jokes and make people laugh I like to smile and laugh myself too. When I'm locked up I feel sad and very stressful. I write a letter expressing myself to my people. I like to let my love ones know how I feel. I like expressing my thoughts and feelings, sometimes I feel sorry for myself because I'm here locked up.

-Young man

From The Beat: You're right. You made a couple of mistakes. And part of making mistakes is also learning from them. You can't keep committing the same mistakes. The system don't play. After juvenile hall, it's county and the pen. We don't want to see you go to any of those facilities, and we're sure you aint trying to go there either. So just be coo and try to stay outta trouble. Think before you do things, so you won't have to come back here.

Got Caught!

I got caught cheating when I was trying to take a test. I was doing it for 15 min in the math part. Then when my friend asked me to let me see the paper you got. I was like "What paper? It ain't no paper on my desk fool."

Then the teacher was like "What y'all talking about here? It's suppose to be quiet. It's a test going on! What is this right here? Did you steal this paper from my desk?"

I didn't say nothing so she gave me a F on the test. So I got mad at my potna for making her come over here.

-Lil' Phan

From The Beat: Why were you cheating on the test? You didn't study? You didn't have enough confidence in yourself to think you can past the test? You can't go through life cheating! You're not gonna get anywhere. If you fail, it's okay, just try it again. There is nothing wrong with failing. You just have to focus on succeeding and don't let anything get in your way.

Another flow

Twenty minutes to write don't mind
Just enough time to unwind
Since I can't rewind

As I walk a straight line
I take this time to free my mind
Since physically I am trapped
In this cage that fills with rage
Get on my level a rebel against the president
Never hesitant too intelligent
But in here my sensation is my imagination
To free my spirit, mind and soul
As I realized that they are institutionalized
But books got me memorized

-No Hesitation Moneys Motivation.

From the beat: Nice flow. But what kind of rebel are you? Are you a rebel that rebels against the law and gets locked up all the time? You saying, you a rebel against the president, why? What does the president have to do with you being locked up? What would you do if you were president?

True Shade Of Brown

Brown flags arriba!(up)
Black ones pa vajo!(down)
Pulling solid trabajo!(job)
Strong with the mind!
And also with cuerpo!(body)
We're not hard to find!
In el dia de los muertos!(The day of the dead)
Neither Cinco De Mayo!
Or any other day
Brave like a gallo!(rooster)
And that's how we stay!
Just a lil' taste of how we get down!
Solid Mexican! True shade of brown!

-Gajet

From The Beat: Nice poem. You sound real proud of your heritage. But what do you mean by true shade of brown? Are you saying Mexicans are the only true brown people? How about the rest of the Latin Countries? You don't consider any other Latin People from other countries brown?

This Is Who I Am

I am a guy that likes to play sports. I don't like to get in trouble but I like to have fun but not push the envelope too much or not at all. I am calm. I don't get mad very easy. I also get along with almost everyone, but as soon as they do something to me I get away from them.

-P

From The Beat: Sounds like you get along with a lot of people. What did you do for you to end up in a place like this? Stick to your sports and humble attitude man so you won't get into any trouble.

Young Man

I am a young black male, 17.

I come from Oakland.

I'm a cool dude.

I like to play basketball,
but as a youngsta I lost my mother to the streets
at the age of 8

at the age of 16 I lost my great grandma to cancer,
but when I turned seventeen

I got a lil' taller
people started to look at me different because I wear
baggie clothes.

-Paris

From The Beat: Wish you would have taken this further. People judge people by the way they dress and look. If you wear baggy clothes people often label that as a thug appearance. What you must do is shake it off. Forget what other people look at you as. What do you see when you look at yourself? Don't let other people's thoughts bother you. You are who you are regardless, so handle your business and stay out these facilities. Make a change for the better!

No Tears

When I was sitting on the block
My mom was in shock
I was smoking some weed
While my mom blowing her tears into leaves
I asked my dad why?
And I think he lied to me when he told me he didn't
know I was alive
Till that day I won't cry
But it is like I don't even have tears.

-Lil' Quis

From the beat: That's messed up that you're dad said that shhh to you. But you know you ain't missing out on anything. He's the one missing out on an opportunity to get to know a great kid.

Who am I?

To the law I am just a criminal. Yeah, I'm locked down for a 211 with a 707, but they still don't know me.
Yeah, sometimes I take, but I also give and eat and let eat 'cause I got heart.

I ain't greedy and I ain't a bad person but the judge don't care. Good or bad ,daughter or no daughter, it ain't his problem. But you know what, I don't give a damn what anybody thinks. Now all I could do is be real to myself and keep it lit.

-Seron

From The Beat: Maybe to the law you might be a criminal, but to us you're a young dude caught up in your environment making mistakes. You need to stop doing whatever it is that's bringing you to jail. No judge is gonna give a damn. The judge has a job to do. But it's up to you to give a damn about your life and your daughter's life.

Ghetto Living

See the hood is so crazy sometime it goes to slow
Sometime it goes fast sometimes you just know
When to go hit the cuts you can tell when it's bad
So play it cool lay it down you gone know what it is
When they come to get even they gone come for your kids
It's so serious the game can't get beat
Like taking up a fight with undefeated concrete
So think about real hard before you make a career
'Cause you get knocked down easily like a deer
"Man for real the streets are crazy but I love it!!!"

-Shady-Bo

From The Beat: Why are you so infatuated by all the drama in the streets?! Do you want to die young? You don't have any goals? You don't want to have your own pad with hella cars? You rather spend your time getting into trouble and risking your life instead?

Painful Stereotypes

I'm Asian so I get a lot of stereotypes people coming at me. They say oh your Asian your suppose to be smart but ssh I'm not. I made the stupidest choice ever. I went to a fight with a gun and got caught and went to Juvenile Hall.

I should of listen to my girl and mother and stayed at home that night. I made a mistake that time but next time I am going to think before I do something.

Now all I'm doing is time. Most stereotypes are to young Asian males.

-Derrick

From The Beat: Everybody has their own stereotypes. Like not all Latino people are Mexican, there are Salvadoreans, Nicaraguans, Brazilians, etc. And not all Asians drive rice rockets. But the stereotypes are there is because people like us put those labels on people. Why can't we just be plain people?

Fabulous Funny Baby Stories

I got a little baby nephew who goes by the name of Jaruis. The boy is two years old, but he thinks he's five. He likes to pour his own juice and run his own bath water. And most of all, he tries to change his own pull up's. He woke me up out of my sleep just to start talking hella shhh.

-Chip

From the beat: Damn sounds like that baby is all grown up. Does he take after anybody in your family? It looks like he's a real independent little person. Does he remind you of a younger you?

From Max to Camp

I been locked up for the past two months because I came in for some stuff I didn't do. I was in Max Unit for a month and a half, but now I came to Camp Sweeney.

I been here for two weeks, trying to get my first home pass, so I can go home and be with my family and some of my real friends. I'm trying to get my six months done and over with so I don't have to come back to this camp and stay at home.

While I'm at camp. I am gonna try to do a good program so I can try to get out as early as possible. Now I wish I wasn't hanging around some of the people I have been and know I learn how to pick my right friends.

-J-H

From The Beat: We're glad you're one step closer to freedom, and to that second chance we know you deserve. While you're at camp, be sure to take advantage of whatever programs they have, so that you can be set up with a job, and a chance for some serious education, and a future when you get out.

Rules To Camp

How's my ninjas doing in that shhh, meaning juvenile hall? Keep your heads up and don't let staff get to your heads 'cause it ain't worth it to cuss them out or talk mess all day, just going bad period.

Keep your cool and stay out the way. Like up here at camp there's three rules to graduation:

1. Stay to your self
2. Mind your own business
3. Follow staff directions.

That's all you gots to do up here for two months so I know how to get through this camp. I been coo'. Not at the begging but now I'm coo' just got back from a N.U. so I'm good. Holla.

-Lil' T

From The Beat: We bet people on their way to camp will be glad to see this blueprint for success, especially because you learned this wisdom the hard way. Now that we know you can write a good blueprint, would

Who am I?

I am a young black educated man who has a future of responsibilities. What I mean when I say responsibilities is I have two sisters and one brother.

Our fathers are not in our lives right at the time, and our mother will get old and gray one day so that's when I come in. I will have to get it together while I have a chance. I always been the man of my house but I'm really going to be the man of the house one day and take care of my family.

I even have a little son soon to be born and he will have to look up to his daddy so I have to get it together so I could stay out of here. I even have an 89 year old grandma I have to look after too.

-Chip

From the beat: Damn you have a ton of responsibilities. Why are you here? You should be taking care of your family. We hope that your experience in the halls brings out the responsible young man in you. We wish you the best of luck and congratulations on your soon to be son.

RIP Wheelock

This is Lil' Nario. My best friend got killed and he didn't do nothing to nobody. So that tells me what kind of people are out there? People don't care about nobody but themselves, but I'm getting money so I'm not tripping off nobody right now.

I'm back in school about to get out of camp, and when people say things you don't like, don't trip... Just move on, but I'm about to go for my ninja for realbut if you read about me in this Beat Within, and you coming to camp, don't run just get this over with and its hella j-cats.

My best friend was up here. He ran and got killed, so that was crazy for the camp but I see you when I see you All gas no brakes.

-Lil' Nario

From The Beat: You're in a tough position right now, because like you say, "all gas no brakes." You know where that leads: Right over a cliff. And you need those brakes, you need to learn how to steer, how to lay off the gas, because you, Lil Nario, are going places. Some people just drive around in circles, going nowhere until they crash. Other people have a place to go - a future to drive towards a goal they're heading towards. Tell us your goal - and then drive.

I Started Being Bad When...

I started being bad when I started going to temple. I was around seven, and there used to be a group of us. It was like our own little gang just for Temple. Every Sunday I would go with my brother and a lot of my cousins and just get in trouble.

We use to steal from the older parents that run it. We use to go bad on them. And sometimes hit them. I remember this one time I went to go camping with other temples then I was going tent to tent looking for candy so I can steal then from all the ones that had stuff in there.

I would take it then take a piss in people tents. Then later that day I would see people crying. I still think that is funny tho'. Haha.

When I got kicked out of temple I started smoking, hanging around gangs and started playing with knife and guns, I been getting locked up a lot. And now I'm at camp its good tho'. I'ma do my program shout out to my bro Billy.

-Linh

From The Beat: It sounds like you and your friends had some serious rage in you - going around and acting out all over town. To look at you though, you seem calm, quiet, polite. It's like there's two sides to Linh - and we're not sure which one is the side you want to feed, and grow. Will you hook us up with a piece that explains those two sides - Linh bright and dark?

Who am I?

I'm a kid who had a bad life.
 I'm a kid with no love
 I'm a kid that will succeed one day,
 I'm kid of whose cards have been dealt wrong
 But will play them right.
 They will tell me I'm a fiasco but I'm no fiasco.
 I see myself in a crappy life.
 Some people say that I'll never get there,
 But I can see the light at the end of the tunnel
 All I have to do is keep running to my track and
 succeed.

-Momo

From The Beat: If you do follow your higher self, your confidence, your dreams, you'll definitely get there. And when you do, we hope you find us, so you can tell us the story of how you overcame your struggles. Maybe we'll even bring you into the hall as a guest so you can inspire a new generation of young people. So do it - prove the ones who don't believe in you wrong!

Was I Caught Cheating!

I been caught cheating before hella times. I mean I love females and that's a well-known fact. Well one time my ex-female caught me cheating, busting her own cousin in her bedroom when she went somewhere with her friend, and her cousin happen to be there. Her cousin was really feeling me so I had to do something about it. So she ended up letting me bust. While I was smacking my ex-girl came in and was hella heated.

I was living with her at the time in her momma's house. Well after she busted me and her cousin, she threw all my clothes out the door and told me to leave so I did. Then she called all my uncles and aunties and they were on me all day. Telling me I'm stupid about what I did. But forget it, what they talking about? I'm going to remain in the game.

-Lil Rondale

From The Beat: That was the old you, but see the new you is going to have to be different. You will have to start treating women with respect, you know why? Because your baby daughter, who we know you love more than anything, is going to learn everything there is to know about respect from the way you treat women. It's true. Not only that, but a man who can't be true to a woman is a man who can't be true to himself, and vice versa. We know it sounds cold, because we're saying you need to change almost everything about how you relate to sex and faithfulness and respect, but man, that's what fatherhood is all about. And it's worth it.

Cheating - For Fifty Dollars

I was in a relationship with this girl name Alena for two years now. She caught me cheating on her last year with this girl name Aleze. She caught me one day sitting at the park with her kissing her and everything. But when she saw me she ran away and started to cry. Like a minute later I told Aleze that it can't work between me and her.

Then I went to Alena's house. She saw me the through the window. I saw her sitting at the couch crying and hella mad.

When I'd try to talk to her or tried to hug her she kept on pushing me away from her. Then like 30 minutes later, she was like, "why you had to do that to me?" Then I told her don't trip I don't like her. I'd made a bet with my friend that I could get with Aleze my friend bet me 50 dollars. So that's why I'm writing you this. Well alright then I'ma stop it right here.

-Baby Al

From The Beat: When you let money get involved with your love life, you make the girl cheap, and you make yourself cheap. What happened? How did you feel afterwards? How did you feel when you were watching her cry? Did you really make the bet, or is that just what you told your girl?

Just Waiting

What's up Beat, well waiting to go to go to court on the 23rd to see what the judge want to say. So I'm just waiting. But I hope they let me out cause if they give me a chance I know I could do it and not come back because I'm going to school and stop doing drugs.

-Ernesto

From The Beat: We're glad to hear that you want to get your life straight. If you need any help you can ask us. And if you need any help don't be afraid to ask your family and friends.

With Her Cousin

What's up Beat? Well this your homie Chikillo from Oakland. Well I was with this girl name Vanessa like for one year, until she found that I was cheating on her with her cousin. Because I invited Vanessa to the movies and she said if she could take somebody with her.

So I said a "Sure. Why not?"

So then I when to pick her up at her house. When I called her cell phone she answered. So I was like I'm waiting for you outside your house. She was like "wait two minutes I be out there." So when she came out, she came with her cousin and then Vanessa seen her cousin hugging me. Her cousin kissed me in front of Vanessa. So that's how she found out I was cheating on her.

Well Beat this vato is out.

-Chikillo

From The Beat: What happened. Did she forgive you? Did you feel bad? Have you ever cheated on anyone since? And dude - your own girl's COUSIN? Isn't that some bad karma right there?

How Could You

I remember this one time I got caught cheating on my girl. I was at school in Oakland. This one day we was going to lunch and was walking with my girl across the fields to the bench on my way I seen this one Mexican girl sitting on the stairs by herself. She was about 5'2" and hella thick so the first thing that pop into my mind is I'm bout to talk to this girl. So when we made it to the bench I told my girl I was going to the bathroom so on my way I walked to her and started talking to her.

After I got her number and etc then when I was walking away I thought everything was cool. Then I noticed my girl and her friends were staring at me. Then I was walking towards them then the bell rang I ran upstairs to class then when I came out of class her friends was telling me "Why you do Josy like that?" Then when I got home I had like two messages on my phone. She was crying talking bout "how could you," So I was just thinking about it all night.

-Lil' Marcus

From The Beat: What we don't understand is that we know how much you cared about Josy... you wrote a terrific piece about her just a few weeks ago. And then you turned around and hurt her. Did she forgive you? It seems like you definitely regretted it.

Caught!

I got caught cheating on my girl because they went to the same school, and one of my girl's potnas told my other girl that I was going out with her and then they 3 wayed me and started to talk shhh. Yea that's my story.

Now your boy Crazy got to go stay up.

-Crazy

From The Beat: We do think that three-way telephone lines are a good way to force cheaters into being honest. But did you have true feelings for either one of these girls? Or were you just missing around.

Update from Lil' Capy

What's up wit it Beat? This is Lil' Capy from Oakland. I'm just up here in camp thuggin' it out. I talk to my PO she said I'm getting out on late April. I been here since august 7th I'm just happy they didn't make me start over my time. So that's coo' well I'm out RIP Dash, G-Money, Lil Art, Goofy.

Well when I get out I'm pretty sure I'm going back to the hood and do the same shit I've been doin' all my life 'cause that's all I know. Hood shhh.

TBW: Where do you think you'll be in ten years?

In ten years I'll most likely be doing the same shhh. I'll just be older but still on the block, or dead, or in jail.

TBW: Have you ever had dreams about what you'd want to be if you could be or do anything?

I'll be a police officer, so I can take all the guns from people, so we can all fight.

-Lil' Capy

From The Beat: It's true, if there were no guns, then a fight would just be a fight, there wouldn't be so many deaths, and especially there wouldn't be so many innocents getting caught by those stray bullets. When you think about it, how many people have you lost because of the way guns make people crazy?

Split Personality

One part of me wants to stay in Oakland and be in the street and do crime. And the other part says leave, do something with my life, go to school and college and stuff.

The bad part of me got me in Camp Sweeney today. And my good side is saying why are you here when you could be on the honor roll like you was last year?

The bad part of me is like "You can pimp this shhh. It's too easy for the crime you did. But it's hard to not listen to the bad side when it sound so loud.

But my dream goes to my good side, and that is to be a doctor and be someone and that's why my bad side is dying by the day.

-James

From The Beat: And look at everything you have to live for! Honor roll, congratulations! Dreams of college, even better. Being a doctor - incredible. You could actually be the person who saves lives, the one who turns to a crying mother and says "you son is going to be OK, ma'am." You could own your own house, and take vacations in the Bahamas. And every night you could sleep in soft pillows with a clear mind, knowing that you became a true hero.

Caught Cheatin'

I've been caught cheatin' befo'.

See I was goin' with this gurl Myra, and one day I called my ex, Allanah and she came and picked me and stuff happened when I got to her house.

The thing is they went to the same school and one of her loud mouth. Friends started poppin' off at da mouth and Myra found out. One day they called me but my cousin had my phone 'cause I was with Kiki and they were askin' him all kinds of questions about Allanah, but the thing is Myra was on three-way with Allanah, so they tried to get me caught up but my cousin had my back so they left it alone.

I ain't heard from Myra since.

-Spwaru

From The Beat: Hah, this sounds like something that could have happened in a movie! Did you feel bad about what happened? Was it the first and only time that you ever cheated on anyone? Have you been cheated on?

Do Yo' Thang

Hey what's up The Beat? This is yo' boy Lil' Snoopy from Oakland. I'm just over here at camp trying to do my time.

Basically I just want to pimp this bootsie program, 'cause when I walk up out of here, I don't want to have no probation or no cops lookin' for me. I just want to be tucked wit' my boys and be on, probably even working. I do know as long as I get out it's all good 'cause I fasho' don't wanna be here showerin' in front of all these ninjas and takin' a dump wit' company beside me. I wanna take my time and go dumb in the toilet, well I just wanna say to all them ninjas coming to camp to not run 'cause it's hella easy ... bopping but easy.

Just pay your dues and go home to your loved ones so you can go back wit' no worries and do yo thang. I know you want to go wit' your lady, so just keep your heads up and don't stress too much love to all the homies doin' hard time.

-Lil' Snoopy

From The Beat: That kind of positive attitude will help you make it through your incarceration, and if you can keep it up when you leave, it will also help you stay free. But here's the trip: You want to stay true to your homies, right? But does that mean you go back to the street life after your release? We hope not. Because it's too much suffering when you live that life. What kind of work are you looking for? There's plenty of jobs for you, if you're dedicated. Let us know and we can even tell you about a few places that are hiring.

Every since

Since the day after Christmas I've been locked up in these walls,

Everyday I'm wearing somebody else's draws,

It's kind of hard for me not to go bad,

Every time I go to court the judge makin' me mad,

Every time I see my mama I can tell that she is very sad.

-Jamon

From The Beat: You're a great rhymers, but we had to cut this great piece in half. You know why? Because you ended up on threats towards people. We know you're not really someone that would go bad on the judge the way you say, but we also know that if you present yourself to the world in a violent way, the world will see you that way. And like you said - this is about you and your freedom and your love for your family and the fact that you are better than this!

Who I Am

Who I am is what I am.

People say I'm a punk -- others say I'm a beast. But does it really matter? 'Cause I'ma lock in this camp.

The camp is OK, but home is much better.

What I want everyone to see is that life isn't fair life, and isn't supposed to be fun all the time. I wish everyone could see that being gangsta isn't every ninja's dream ... people who don't understand is that how every g haven't done all that.

They say they hardcore, killing, people. Why is there so much violence? I understand when someone sucka out 'cause they don't want to get in trouble. You can be the realest ninja on the street. But when all your true ninjas turn good he gone turn happens he gone fall.

He gone turn into a businessman and all the youngstaz going to say oh he a sucka but they don't know how he was doing in the past. Be safe when you read this "g" thang.

-D-H

From The Beat: We feel you, it sucks that people still believe that being "hard" on the streets is something to value. What about the young brother who studies hard, works a full time job making a small but legit paycheck, treats his girl well, and tries to stay out of the bullets' path because he's got big dreams that go farther than a city block? That's the kind of young man who deserves respect - that's true gangsta.

My Son and His Ice Cream

My son was like three years old. I was in my bedroom, he was eating some ice cream in the kitchen. So what happened was my baby daddy got out the bathroom, well my son was play with his ice cream on the floor... it was funny but really not.

Rest In Peace Lil Tay Tay.

-New New

From The Beat: The way you say it we can actually see it. It's good that you are holding on to good memories, despite the bad things you've been through. Peace.

Pressure

Check it out one time. The situation is like this: It's 6:00 in the morning, and the police are my door. I got a gun in my waist because I refuse to sleep with out it a zip of streets in my shoe.

So like a real ninja I hop up and grab the bundle. I run to the bathroom and flushed the bundle down the toilet so there's no evidence of a drug case that could be against me in court.

So once again I've been in a hot situation more than once, so pressure means very little to me. I sat on the couch and let them come in and caught my first gun case

-Lil' June

From The Beat: Sure you stay cool under pressure, but you're the one who put that pressure on yourself in the first place! You're so proud of getting out of trouble... but what we want to know is what are you going to do to stop getting yourself in troublesome situations? You're too good to spend your life in jail, or end your life early, so something is going to have to change.

Cheating

I have never caught someone cheating on me (I think they knew better) but I have been caught cheating once.

One day I told my boyfriend that I wanted to stay the night at my sister's house, well instead I called an ex-boyfriend and told him to come stay the night at my moms house.

After he got to my house I cut my phone off. My boyfriend blew my moms and sisters phone up, and then he showed up while we were havin' sex but he still loves me.

-Kings Wife

From The Beat: Is this the boyfriend you are with now? Why and how did you cheat on him? Do you still have feelings for your ex? The question on why you did this is a mystery to us - because we know you love him, so why would you cheat on him?

What People Don't Know

Who am I? I am my heart, my soul but there's also a side that people don't know and that's my bad side.

Everyone is used to the funny, smart, goofy, and loving person. Like when you ask someone about me they say who is Corey, that funny a** lil' boy. But there are sometimes when I loss my source of my mind and my anger takes place. And that's not cool, but I suffer mentally and physically, and it hurts, so I try my best to stay the cool Corey. And if you don't like it, that's me, and you gotta deal with not liking it.

-Lil' Corey

From The Beat: What happens when the angry Corey takes over? Because there's nothing wrong with feeling anger, it's really more about how you DEAL with that anger. Like if you just express it by talking to a friend, or by writing it down, it's all good, and you don't mess with the life of "cool Corey." In other words - you don't have to pretend that dark side doesn't exist, it's more like you need to find a way to manage the dark side so it doesn't mess up your life. How do you manage it?

Cheating and Forgiveness

One time I was in jail and I had just got out. I went to go and see my dude. He was in bed with another girl.

When I sensed that I wanted to kill him and that girl so as pay back I cut all his hair off. But when I tried to leave he came and grabbed me by my hair so I was kicking and slapping him. But he end up letting me go and I ran out the house to go back home.

But he end telling me that he was high and and drunk and that's why he was have sex with that girl. But I ending up forgivin' him

-Jacqueline

From The Beat: That man did NOT deserve your forgiveness. First off, he can't control is drinking, second of all, that's no excuse for cheating, third, he messed with you physically after he'd already messed with you mentally? No way. You deserve better. After all you've been through with bad men in your family, why go find bad man to go out with too!

All My Homies Share The Same Pain

What's up Beat? I want to tell you how crazy life can be at times.

I see life my own way thru my own way eyes
And through everything I believe that anything is possible.

In my world fishes fly high in the sky and pigeons swim deep under the water.

I love my ninjas, and if it wasn't for them I wouldn't be who I am today.

I love my family my main ones.

If it wasn't for them, I wouldn't even be here today.

Life cant be easy but it's a game to be played

And everybody has to play it.

Sometimes I wonder what life after death will be like when our time come.

I don't know but it's hard.

Everybody stresses but I have to maintain.

All my homies share the same pain ...so we stay young and crazy.

-Hoang

From The Beat: We aren't sure whether you meant this to be a poem, but it sure felt like one when we were reading it - it felt like a poem full of violence and pain, but with beauty and love too. The thing is - if you truly love your homeboys (and we believe you do) shouldn't you all be trying to find a way to help each other up that mountain, instead of chasing each other down into the valley? Think about what we said - and tell us if you believe in uplift.

Piranha in the Jungle

Who am I?

I be that boy who out there like a lion in the jungle
I see my prey then I eat his ass up like the piranha in the jungle

So if you come my way you need to think twice and put your ass on ice

Where you can't see your wife

And you can't see light because them 223's is so bright that I take your eyesight

And I know I wasn't right but I post for all means

So don't play with my money or it get real ugly

Like a Chihuahua fight pit bull ain't that brutal

So that's who I be that crazy ninja in the street so come meet me I'm little Mat.

-Lil' Mat

From The Beat: Having met you in person it's hard for us to admire this poem, even though your rhymes are so good and clever. Why? Because you have so much talent, and in our conversations with you we know that you're a lot more than just a mean fighter... you have wisdom and smarts and insight and pride... but that doesn't show in this piece. In this piece, you only show the side the judge sees, the heartless criminal. Why is that?

Angel

December 18, 2007

An angel was given to my life,
A beautiful present from heaven,
Thankfully he came to my life,
He might not be my biological son,
He may not be my real son,
But I will raise him as my son,
And love him as if he was mine,
I'll love him for life,
His mom beautiful as can be,
I'm thankful she was given to me,
Not officially my lady,
But soon to be,
Always and forever I'll keep them with me,
In my heart hands and mind,
Thank you lord up above,
For these two beautiful humans,
No more looking I'll do,
For now I have Hunter and Sabrina too.

-Gonzo

From The Beat: We hope that when you are out, you will come around to the offices and introduce us to both Hunter and Sabrina. Even more, we hope you keep this poem with you, folded in a pocket, to pull out and read whenever you are tempted to do wrong. Love will help you stay focused on what you need to do to break free the chains that hold you back.

My Grandpa

I was close to my grandpa and he died when I was 15 years old.

I miss when he come to the house and every time he come he ask me to scratch his back. He'd go to the kitchen and I'd make him coffee, and sometimes he tell me to be somebody.

I would be like ok but now I know what he was talking about. And he would say to me, don't get caught up in these streets. After that he went back to LA and he was about to die -- but he made it.

We want to see him, and he died about three days when we left that's why I am here lightweight.

-Roosevelt

From The Beat: Do you mean you feel like you are in here because things got bad after you lost your grandfather, or is there more to this story? Remember, it's not too late to listen to the words of this man who loved you and truly "be somebody." Peace.

My Baby Stories...

When I was a baby and I was at my auntie's house, my auntie was trying to give me my bottle. I guess she was saying some shhh I didn't want to hear then I just said "I" you "b".

She ran to my mama and said "Tammy he can talk!" And my mama said "no he can't."

Then my auntie told her what I said and when I got older, she told me what I said. Then my mama told me that my auntie was watching my oldest sister and brother, and my auntie called the police, because my sister pulled my brother off the bed.

The police asked my mama did she want to press charges on my sister!

-Lil' Miami

From The Beat: Whoah. First off, you must have been a smart baby to learn to talk so young, just like you're a smart adult now. Second: You must have been around a lot of drama, if those were the words you were hearing when you were so little. From what you write here, we hope you write more, to fill us in on what it was like for you growing up. You got the words, now use them, for the "Life of Lil Miami." We can't wait to read it.

You're Gonna Break Someone's Heart Tonight

What's up Beat? This yo' boy Lil' Mang.

Once I was at a club called "City Nights" in San Francisco, California. Before that night, I was told by a close friend of mine that my current girlfriend and a girl that I was talking to were both going to be present at the club...so I told to myself, "Self, you're going to break someone's heart tonight."

So the night falls and the sun is setting. My buddies and I arrive an hour or two hours late to the starting time. The first person I spotted when I stepped in the club was the girl that I talked to. She asked for a dance, but I told her I had to use the restroom, to avoid being seen with her.

Twenty minutes past and I'm now with my girlfriend, but little did I know her "dear friend" happens to be the girl that I was talking to!

Eventually by the end of the night, I ended up getting dumped and took a loss for two beautiful ladies. Obviously I'm the one that got my heart broken.

My advice to everyone, stay faithful to your woman and treat her right, because if you don't, another man out there will.

-Lil' Mang Last Of A Dying Breed

From The Beat: Ouch! Self, someone got their heart broke for sure. Did you ever get any kind of forgiveness from either of those girls? Or is it over for good? And have you got yourself a new girl now, one you stay true to, who stays true to you too?

When I Get Out

When I get out of here I'm going to eat at McDonalds, Wendy's or Jack In The Box. Most of all I'm going to enjoy getting in the shower for as long as I please. I'm going to love coming out of my room whenever I want.

Most importantly I'm going to think things through before I do them. I'm also going to eat when I want to. Most important I'm going to stay out of juvenile hall. I'm going to do all my work from school and house chores. This is my New Year's Resolution.

-Jah-Kwan

From The Beat: Sounds like you have a good New Year's Resolution. We hope you do think things through. It seems like you value your freedom a lot more now. We wish you the best and don't come back. Unless it's to our office to drop off some McD's.

Unhappy Valentine's Day

I remember when I got caught cheatin'.

It was Valentine's Day, and I had just woke up. My old female had called and told me to meet her, so I met her and then she had to leave. Then we talked I kissed her on her forehead and she left then I called my other chick and she came and she asked was the gift in my hand for her I said yea and gave it to her then next thing I know my other female was coming back and then she asked who is this B?

Then she started diggin' in her purse. I thought she was diggin' for her phone but really she was getting a knife and she stabbed me in my knuckle. Then I wanted to blaze her ass but my potna wouldn't let me.

But later that day his female stabbed him in his chest.

-Mo Mo

From The Beat: This kind of rage and violence is so far from healthy love, we don't even know where to begin. Since then have you found better ways of being? Did you grow up watching people who "loved" each other fight and hurt each other? Because if so, you got your lessons in love from teachers who need a few lessons of their own. Good love is about trying to do right by another person. We do hope you get a chance to give and receive that kind of true caring one day.

Caught Cheating Stories

One of my ex girlfriends, a couple of friends and I were chillin' at "office in the sky," (basically a kick it spot in Livermore) we were all drinking having fun. After a while we finished off the little bit of alcohol we had so we went to the local liquor store where we got more liquor, a gallon of E&J.

After getting the liquor, my group of three females and three males move the group back to my girlfriend's (at the time) house. Basically she had an open house and we had a gallon to kill so we moved over there to kick it down. After drinking about two shots each I passed it on the next couple. Everyone got shhh faced. After a while I went to the bathroom (that super-burrito was killing me). Just about a half hour went by I come back in the room and the bottle was empty on the floor next to my girlfriend and things were getting crazy between the girls and the two guys.

Another half hour goes by and my ex-girlfriend's mother comes home. By the time she made it to the room everyone but me was butt ass naked on top of each other. Her mom came in without them knowing, she ran out of the house and called the cops. It took them about fifteen to twenty minutes to get there. They brought more than enough cars. They rushed the house and brought them all out of the house naked in front of the whole complex. After they got taken down to the station, my ex-girlfriend's mom sat on the front porch talking to me about why I wasn't drunk and in the room with them. I told her ya know she might not want to go in the bathroom. All she could do is laugh her ass off. I went back to the liquor store got me a couple of pints and called it a night.

When I woke up the next morning, my ex broad was begging me to come back. She couldn't even remember what she did the night before her mom reminded her. Moral of the story: Don't mess up and come back the next day begging for forgiveness. Just don't mess up in the first place & know your limit or just don't start.

-Pedro

From The Beat: It sounds like you felt betrayed by your girl, and we can understand that, but all we can think is how many stories of rape, violence, and other kinds of trouble all start out with a bunch of people getting together and getting too drunk. ... Look at you - did you stop to think maybe you should step in and take your girl out of that situation? No, instead, you just went and drank even more. What if you'd tried to protect her from her own self destruction right then? Helping her, instead of judging her?

Cheating Stories: Third Grade

One day I was in class taking a test, right. It was a math test, so I told the teacher that I didn't want to do it, 'cause I didn't know some of the questions.

She said "Fine you want a F on it?"

"No," I said.

So my potna said "yeah I'm gone do it. Tell her that so you could copy out of mine."

So I did it, right. While I'm doing the work about for 15 minutes, she came by, talking about stop talking, it's a test going on right now. I shut up. Then she saw my potna giving me the paper, so she said "Oh you cheating now, I thought you was gone try!"

Then she took my paper threw it away and gave me a "F" on it. That was my first time in third grade cheating on the test ...when you do it like it nothing.

-Phan

From The Beat: Did this teacher talk to you about it later? Or help you with the Math you were struggling with? We're not saying it's OK to cheat - it's not, of course, but we do hope that the teacher who failed you also tried to help you take that next step towards improving your Math skills!

Not Thinking Straight

I ended up in jail because I wasn't thinking straight. I was in the house, on the spot ready to get some fast money to support my high.

I only had \$2 and no other way to get some money. I put the controller down and told my cousin you want to see this gun. They was holding it and told me to let them use it. Me I said naw, and said I'ma go with y'all because it ain't no fun if I cant get none.

So as we robbed an innocent man walking down a street we run off and when we turned a corner on MLK a couple of bike police tried to stop us. But no I wasn't having it. One of my cousins got away and three of us got caught.

I got caught by a police car and when I threw the gun it went off! So now I'm sitting chilling like a villain, looking at the ceiling in San Quentin. Max five years and doing more than a year.

I'm in here because I was hungry and eager.

-Doe Goody

From The Beat: Frankly, we think you were in here because you were misguided and thinking stupid. You didn't need the money, you didn't need to be high, you didn't need to be on the spot... was it worth a year of your life? No. And you know that now, so we're not trying to hate on you - but you titled your piece with your turf, which makes us wonder, have you learned from this mistake? Or are you just itchin' to get back to the spot? We hope not, because know you deserve so much more.

Life's A Toilet

Life's a toilet because it seems if you're raised in the streets you cant go up. You go to the right with yo homies and you go down and down just like a toilet.

So if you're not on probation and you're in the streets you need to go to school and then deal with yo' potnas. But tell them you still cool with 'em but school's first. And if they say I'm not kicking it with yo' ass no more then they ain't yo' potnas.

But if they understand, then they yo' true homies to you and they will be with you till the end go to school and then kick it.

-Young H

From The Beat: That's deep. It's true, if your boys are really your boys, they they would understand. And if they were really your boys they wouldn't want you to go to jail. If they were really your boys they would want you to be successful in life. And they'd never try to tempt you away from that.

Judging

If they actually took the time to get to know us instead of judging us by our records maybe they would understand.

-Shonte

From The Beat: You're right, we can't get to know you just by looking at a file in your records. Why do you think they judge you only by your mistakes?

My Brother

The person who I miss the most is my one-year-old brother.

I was the one that saw him walk, I am the only one that can make him go to sleep in the day, I gave him his first bottle he drank, I am the only one that can make him stop crying, that's the most important out there.

-Lil' L

From The Beat: You are basically almost this little boy's daddy! Just imagine how much he must miss you. We hope this helps you stay focused on getting out (and staying out) because you are the light of a baby's life, and nothing is more important than that! Peace.

Who Am I?

What's good wit' da Beat? It's ya boy, Young Meez in unit 7 an' I'm doin' what I do? But I'ma tell you an' whoever is reading this about myself.

Well, first off, I'm a young black man wit' dreds. I have committed some crimes in my past, and they are scared of me because of that. But one thing they don't know is that I'm educated, and that's what they really should be scared of. But if you were to look at me, you would think I was a lightweight good ninja. But then when you get to know me, it's like the sayin' goes, "To know me is to love me, man."

Well, a few things you can know about me is that I got a Hollywood smile, I can be one of the nicest people you have ever me. But don't ever take my kindness for weakness.

-Meez

From The Beat: We would never take your kind for weakness. But what we really want you tell us about is what you mean when you say that what they should be afraid of is your education, you mind. What do you mean? What do you plan to do with that education? Seems to us that an educated mind combined with "a Hollywood smile" could get you just about anywhere you chose to go. So, where is it that you want to go?

Going To Be A Wrap

What's good wit' tha Beat? Its you boy V-Guttah still in this hellhole waiting fo' the day I get released. All I got to say is screw the judge and the sucka-ass DA. Wait... One day I'ma catch them two mothas on the outs, and it's going to be a wrap.

-V

From The Beat: With all your sad experience as a slave of the county, you still can't see that if you continue on the path you've chosen, the only one that's going to be wrapped is you! You can SAY screw the judge and the DA all you want, but when you open your eyes (and mind), you'll see that they have the power to screw you! And that's just what they've done, and just what you say you're going to give them the power to do again! How smart is that?

The Beat's A Weak-Ass Program

Well, well, well Beat Within, I'm getting really tired of waiting to see my goddamn piece in your weak-ass Beat program that I only attend to stay out my room. You guys are really inconsiderate about putting my piece in your Beat, but you guys still bother putting other kids' Beat that are about two sentences, and you make my ass wait a month. Please take this piece into some type of consideration instead of writing smart comments back.

-Angel

From The Beat: If you've written pieces that should have been published but weren't, it's our bad, and we apologize. If you've written pieces that don't meet Beat standards, then it's your bad. In any case, if you didn't allow yourself to get locked up and put under the control of strangers (even strangers like us), then you wouldn't have to deal with weak-ass programs like ours!

The Thugs

Yeah, Man, this ANT ready to touch down like Madden! I'm dedicating this to my homies. We done been through it all, bra — hell, cells and back again.

But this time I got a plan to get out and stay out! Ninja's like they really want it, but it's all talk, no action.

-Anto

From The Beat: We're kind of disappointed in you for this, and (as you should have guessed), we had to delete the final threatening sentence... But what disappoints us is that, when we compare the two pieces you wrote, we can't see how you can have both the love of your life at home and the thugs in the street you are looking to beef with. It appears to us that, unless you can move away from the life you celebrate in this piece, there's just no way you and that wonderful girl "holding you down" will ever be able to make a life together. Time to make some hard choices.

Here For Fighting

I'm Ka Cheung. My nickname is Go Low. It mean tall ass in Chinese. I'm not yet 15 years old. Been here for fight. Like to meet all of my friend and go drink.

-Ka Cheung

From The Beat: Keep writing and your English will get better and better. If you go out and drink until you're drunk, you will be in another fight, and you will come back to this place. Is that what you want?

Who Am I

Who am I? I'm a Latino that's proud of myself and my culture. I'm a person who cares about my family because my family always been there for me, and especially my mom. I am a person who gets hate and love. I hate haters, wannabees, succas and liars. I hate all four 'cause they're fakes, and fakes just get me hella mad 'cause they're liars and wannabees. And I hate haters 'cause ninjas who hate are crybabies.

I also go love in me 'cause I love my mom, family, friends, females and mary jane. I love them 'cause they mean so much to me.

That's who I am, a person that hates and loves.

-Alfy

From The Beat: How are you showing your mom and family just how much you love them? One way, we can see, is by these fine words of love that you write (and that they should read). But an even more important way would be for you to stop doing the things that let the system remove you from them, because real love involves self-sacrifice in favor of those who love you.

Lesson Learned

One time I was chilling out with my brother down town tryna get it when I saw this female who was looking to be good. I had to get at her. She was a cool little female. I liked her 'cause she kept it real. I never knew she was this girl I was talking to cousin.

We were talking, getting close one day at her house, when my girl walked in. I was in shock. She tried to introduce us when my girl was like, "I know who he is. He's my man." She got an attitude with me. I wasn't tripping. It was like we were just cool, but my female took it the wrong way, flipped on me and left. Later on she ended up coming back, forgiving me, and giving me another chance. But I learned now to light weight ask her who she knew and who she was related to.

-Cash

From The Beat: Are you still with that first girl? It's hard to stay true to one person, but when you find someone that you like for the right reasons and who likes you in return, why risk losing it all for a little flirtation with someone else? You're lucky she took you back. We don't think she'll give you another chance...

I'm back

Yeah dis yo boi Co-Banga hit you wit da no braina. Yeah harlem in da buildin'. Ya boi back for some phony shhh, a little toast case and a warrant. But y'all know how I bounce back. I went to court today. Dey told me to come back on Friday, and then I'ma see what I'ma do from there. But I'm wit' the big bois now in U6 holdin' it down. Keeping it thumbs up. But cha time is money so I holla at y'all next week. Stay up.

-Lil' Curt

From the Beats: Exactly what do you think you're "holdin' down" while you're imprisoned for "a little toast case and a warrant"? You may be with the big boys, but by ignoring a warrant and ending up in the can for it, you're telling us that you haven't yet started thinking like a big boy... Just how many chances do you think you will get to "bounce back"?

Why

Why do people,
Live da ghetto life
Is it because they feel you can't make wrongs
Just rights

Why is police so racist
Is it because the last couple years,
There was a lot of police chases

Why can't the President,
Be any other race,
Don't you have the same taste

Why is there a lot of killings
Is that just the way,
People express their feelings

Why did god make human beings,
If people die every day,
Over stupid things,

If you believe in God
And every day people die
They die for what reason
You tell me why

-Caddy

From The Beat: The only explanation we can give for death is that there was no death, where would all the people and animals live? Soon, the earth would be overcrowded. But if you're asking why people die before their time, then we have to ask whether the brain the God gave us is really being used. As for the President being a different race, this may very well be the year. Stay tuned...

I Cheated Myself

Yo', what up, I really don't know what to write, but I guess I'll write about a time I cheated myself. I cheated by coming here. I think from the start I should have just turned myself in, but I didn't after five months of being on the run. I ended up getting new charges, which I was trying to avoid.

I think a lot of people have had the same thang happen to them. The unfunny part of this story is that the night I got caught up, my peoples were trying to tell me, "Naw, bra, stay wit' da fam." But like always, I had to be hard-headed and do my own thing. I should've just listened to the ones that knew what's up.

-Money Hungry

From The Beat: Yes, this is a story similar to many we've read before... knowing what you "should have done" but not doing it and paying the price. Have you now learned the kind of lessons that will keep you from doing these things in the future, or will you need to experience more bitter examples with this system before you make some lifestyle changes that will keep you free?

Who Am I?

I am a young block ninja living this savage, thug life. I'm a ninja that the judge is scared to let out because they know how I tear up the streets. I'm a ninja that's hated by many. I'm a ninja that them ninjas tried to take out, but failed to do. I'm a ninja that got thugs ready to ride in the 'cause. I'm a ninja that's ready for whatever.

-Mike

From the Beats: No, you're not "ready for whatever," because you haven't yet experienced all that "whatever" might entail. We read far too many letters every week from people who once thought just like you that they were ready for anything, but who are now doing decades inside our prison empire giving jobs to thousands of grateful prison guards and wishing they could do it over. Try reading The Beat Without if you doubt us.

Same Thing E'ry Day

What's up whodies? Dis ya boy Chris straight out of unit 7, ya heard me? I wanna get out dis boring-ass place. Dis unit is hella predictable. Every night and every morning, I go through the same thing. I wake up, eat breakfast, go back to my room, go to school, wait for lunch, then next without knowing, it would be dinner. That basically my life in dis so-called maximum lockdown.

I'ma holla at The Beat next Tuesday dough, 'cause time is up.

-Chris

From The Beat: There's only one way to deal with the boredom and monotony of this place: Get out and stay out! (But thanks for describing how boring it is.)

Livin' The Fast Life

By the time y'all read this, I'ma be back on my grizzly livin' the fast life. Tomorrow, they gon let me see daylight and I ain't finna turn back. They got me 'bout dumb-ass messed up, if they think I'm finna spend a year in some country-ass wine making city wasting my life. When I get my chance, I'ma chop like I got ten legs. Fassss!

I know the Beat gon have something bad to say about what I'm writing, but I'm just tryna keep all the way treal. Fast life!

What can I say? I got warm blood. I'll be a hot boy till they can stop me.

Young, dumb, an' on the run. Doin' what I do to get what I got and what I'm gon continue to get.

Adadai!!

-J Ban

From The Beat: You are so right, J... You ARE going to get what you continue to get, and that's more of the same. We hope you like wearing the clothes that a thousand boys have worn before you, that you love the delicious and plentiful food you're getting in your slave quarters, and that you enjoy the company of only males, 'cause that's what you're asking for, and that's what's in your future — until you open your eyes and realize that not only can they stop you, but they HAVE STOPPED YOU. It may be for a brief period now, but each time you give them the chance, they will put you away for longer and longer periods. You will just keep putting more money back into the pockets of your keepers. They're grateful to you!

Who Am I

I am a young ninja dat's out there getting ma dough, knockin' ninjas. The judge know me for doing shhh like that. But I'm only livin' up to ma damn name, Lil' Junk. Most of you know who I be. A ninja like me stay on some otha shhh you know.

-Lil' Junk

From The Beat: We're not sure after reading this that you really know who you are. After all, you say you're out there getting your dough, but all we see is you in here making dough for a bunch of people you don't even like. How smart is that?

Who Am I?

Man, I'm nice. Cool. A lady's man. They just see me, and they be like, "Hey that's the iciest over there."

I like to chill with my family, play games and stuff — X-Box, make them laugh, I am funny. I'm a good basketball player like MJ. He can't be better than me, there's no way

Girls see me and be like "Otay!"
I just tell them to come over this way
Being with me is the best way
Ain't nobody better than Mike K

-Da Iciest

From The Beat: The problem with having girls want you on first sight is that you've put yourself into a room where there are no girls! What's wrong with this picture?

Wanting To Change

What's good with the Beat? I just want to write about my life. I think it's time to change my life around and just stop trying to be this bad person and just be with the family. My family needs me out there on the streets. The thing that make me want to change is I got sisters.

-Acie

From The Beat: We sure hope you are serious about your desire to change, and that you make every effort to do what you say you want to do. You've given away enough of your young life to this system!

Clowns

The definition of a clown to me is a person who talks hella shhh behind bars...

But when they out they don't say shhh...

That's a real fake ninja...

-Grumpy

From The Beat: So, to you, the "real ninja" is the one who takes it to the streets? That's probably why you've painted a target on your back and handed away your freedom. Think about it. There are worse things than being a clown!

I Moved On To The Next Ninja

Even though I believe that I'm the flyest chick there is, I have been cheated on, and also done my share of cheating. The last time I got cheated on was by a ninja. When he cheated on me, I found it funny because he didn't think I knew. But since I'm the daughter of Glen and goddaughter of Two-tone, I find out about everything that goes on there.

Anyway, after I found out, he went to jail for five months. When he got out, he thought he was about to have two females on his arm, but was dumbfounded when only one was answering and returning his calls. He found out that I moved on to the next ninja and got mad as hell 'cause it was a rumor going around that I was pregnant. But it was my cousin who was pregnant.

Now I'm receiving letters from him three times every week. I guess it took me to leave him with the girl he decided to cheat on me with to realize he had a solid-ass female by his side.

-Brina

From The Beat: Yeah, we've know a lot of "fly chicks" who hide their beauty behind four walls! We hope you come to realize that freedom and integrity are also part of being the beautiful person you want to be. As for your cheating ninja, what goes around comes around.

Me

I'm a young soldier locked up like a damn animal waitin' for my court date so I could go home, missin' my family and friends, prayin' every night to get out up of here.

Who am I? I'm a king that many people don't like and is too scared to fight, but hatin' on me 'cause they ain't in my light.

They tryin' to give me life, but I'ma keep my head up and fight. Knowin' one day I'm gonna see the light and when I do, keep your eyes open 'cause I might be lookin' at you.

-Young Boy

From The Beat: We had to take out the entire last half of your piece, which was nothing more than an extended threat. We have no doubt at all (and we're sure you will disagree) that if you find yourself doing long years in a prison, you will, one day, look back on the way you think today and realize how self-defeating it is. Far from hurting your "enemies," all you've managed to do is give your life to a bunch of strangers who care nothing for you! If you manage to avoid that long prison sentence they're trying to give you, then we pray that you will come to your senses before you give everything of value away, and find yourself spending years in a cell repeating the phrase, "If only..."

Thinking Of You

Sitting in here thinking if you. Every day in my mind I see your sexy eyes. Every time I hear your voice and stare in your eyes, I know you are my soul mate. I just can't let you go. I need you in my life. I'm thinking of you every day.

-Rina

From The Beat: You say you just can't let this love of yours get away, but you let yourself get away when you gave the system the power to take you away. You need to put some real strength behind these words of love by stopping the things you do that force you to see this person only in your mind and not in the flesh!

What I'd Do For My Kids

What's up wit' it Beat? This ya girl Angel writing to you from unit 5.

Man, I'm still here up in this hellhole again. Let me be real. Being in here is not wassup. Man, I know I need to get myself together. I'ma G and I'ma always be a hustler. I love money, but I also love life. I know when I have kids I'ma have to really get my game tight. Nobody was there for me when I needed support, so the streets raised me. But for the next generation, that's not gone happen.

I want for my kids what I never had — a mother, a father, stable family, stable living arrangements, clothes, shoes, support, everything it could ever need. I'ma give my child the world.

I wish somebody would try to hurt my kids. I'ma provide anyways I can get it — a job, hustling, hitting licks, it don't matter as long as they cool and satisfied. I'ma teach them the game and about the streets and tell them to get an education. Life is about money and love

-Angel

From The Beat: Why in the world would you ever "wish somebody would try to hurt (your) kids" just to prove how much you would do for them? Makes absolutely no sense at all. And the fact that you think that what children need are material things and not their mother home with them guiding them (you SHOULD know by now that hustling and hitting licks only leads away from those you love) tells us that you are still a child yourself. So, until you realize what is most important in a child's life, please don't become a mother!

Who Am I?

Yo', what 'sup? Who am I? Man, I'm a cool-ass ninja, but please don't get on my bad side. It would really be ugly for me and you. Me on my behalf, I got a bad temper and you don't wanna cross it. It would be a rap for you etc...

But otha, than dat, it's good.

-Cameron

From the Beats: So, what you're saying is other than going off with bad consequences for you and whoever you go off on, "it's good." Seems to us that you're not really telling us who you are, just warning others that you're a dangerous dude when you're angry. Is that all there is to you?

King Of The Unit

Yeah, what's good with The Beat? It's Lano. Yeah, a ninja been up in here for about five weeks, and I got hella more time to go. Shhh, I don't know how long. But I'm just in here associating wit' mah ninjas trying to get on step four. Pretty soon I'm going to be the king of this unit, eating Burger King, pizza, and some shhh.

An if I get mah GED in here, I'm really going to be good when I get out. Plus, when I get out, I'm gong back home to mah fine-ass girlfriend. Plus my cousin is on the outs steady supporting a ninja.

-Lano

From the Beats: We admire the efforts you're making in here to get your GED and move to step four. But what are your hopes and plans for when you get out of here? How will you keep yourself free?

The Only One Who Cares

Thinking about my baby
Knowing that I'm his only lady
My man is so fine I know he's mine
I miss him so much, lonely without his touch
It feels like I have known him forever
And I'll never let anyone take him from me ever He's the
man of my dreams
He's the only one that really seems
To care about me
He's the only one that fulfills me
I miss you baby
Trust me, I'm your one and only lady
I love you, Baby

-Goodies

From The Beat: It's nice to have someone you love, but it's even nicer to love yourself! Stop letting the system take you away from all that you love. Start loving yourself, which is another way of saying, start treasuring your freedom!

Fed Up

Man, to hell with The Beat straight up, ninja. I been here for four months and I been writing every Tuesday, but my shhh was only in The Beat once! What's up wit' that shhh?...

-Gloss

From The Beat: We can't tell you why you have only been published once, but if your other pieces look anything like this (which has almost nothing to say and says it only in curses), then maybe you aren't writing anything appropriate. We're only putting this in to let you know we're not afraid of criticism. But even criticism requires some thought and some appropriate language. This piece shows us neither.

Judging Me

Yeah, people judge me. Oh yeah, she is dis, she is dat. Dat girl is this and that girl did this.

Don't nobody know me but me, but I'ma tell you who I am.

My name is Rina. I'm 15 years old. Hella people look at me and say, "Oh, you dat girl dat robbed dat girl," or, "You dat girl dat in dem group homes." So I just look at them and be like, "Who da hell are you? I don't even know you."

Or people on da bus look at me because I'm hella tall and big, so they start to hold on tight to their purse or to the rest of their stuff like I want it.

-Tynna

From The Beat: It is strange that people want to judge others by what they think they know from a quick look. But, at the same time, as long as you are doing illegal activity, you are giving the cops, the DA, the judge, the PO the legal right to judge you. The price of that judgment is your own precious freedom and future, so, if you don't want to be judged in a legal sense, stop giving so much power to others and start living for your own future!

Who Am I?

What's good wit' The Beat? It's that ninja Na-Na writin' about who I am, a young savage an' a beast, a broke ninja thievin'. You ninjas betta ask about me. But yeah, on tha one fo' real, I'm really a calm ninja. But if a ninja try to play me... but if a ninja don't want the beef wit' yo' boi, it's all good because I'ma smooth ninja at some point. But my words are getting short. See y'all next time.

-Na-Na

From The Beat: Your words are not only getting short, they don't teach anything and don't really say much worth saying. We get it, you're a real tough customer! We wish you'd start paying as much attention to what it will mean to keep yourself from being someone's prisoner again as you do threatening others. Until you make that leap, we're afraid this won't be your last experience with voluntary slavery!

Two People In One

What's up world? This young neff da god. The Beat just asked me who am I. That's a funny question because I've been askin' myself the same question lately. You see, I know who I am. I'm actually two people. No, not like I'm crazy. It's more like I have two sides. I have my good half and my bad half.

So it's not that I don't know who I am, it's more like who do I want to be. You see, on one hand I am the smart, athletic lady's man that everyone says should be excelling in life. And on the other hand, I got the street savvy, a hustler that all the hustlers say should ball out soon.

-Kwamaine

From The Beat: Seems like all that savvy you claim to have didn't keep you from wearing another boy's drawers, sleeping in a locked cell, and taking orders from people who don't know you or care much about you. We sure hope that other you — the smart one — takes a good look at the different choices you have made and will make in the future, and is able to see what consequences those different choices lead to. Choose wisely!

Who Am I

What's up with my ninjas at The Beat? Well, feel me, it's yo' boy Rams. When I think about who am I, I believe I'm a pretty chill-ass cat. But otha people might think I'm a dangerous person. But feel me, I'm not, but I can when it comes to doing my dirt. But I really don't care what people think, feel me. Either they love me or hate me. Only people I actually care about how they think of me is my family and my homies that be on the block wit' me. So, whether I look like killer in society's eyes, I'm not gonna change how I look or present myself, feel me.

Well, enough about me. I'll talk to you ninjas later...

-Ramson

From The Beat: We're going to keep it very real with you, Ramson. By not caring what anyone but your family and homies think about you, you're giving power to those you don't care about and taking power from those you do care about. That's why those that love you are crying now, because you aren't with them, and those that hate you are laughing now because you gave the system all the power it needed to take you away from all those people you love. Doesn't sound all that smart to us.

Why I Bang

What's cracking with all the homies out there? This your boy Shadow.

Well, today I'ma talk about my 'hood. Man, homies getting killed, shot, stabbed, jumped. A lot of stress goin' on up in the 'hood. Familias getting hurt and moms wearing black dresses again, yellow tape in the scene, police and homies around, next day getting revenge.

But I'ma tell y'all, some revenge is sweet, but not great. Man, bullets will put chu in a deep sleep. The live is not a joke. I'm married to the life, so we can stop doing what we do, pulling all-nighters, waiting to just get hit for repping where we came from.

The causa is what I represent, that's what I bang, giving my life for a homie. That's what I rep. not no joke because that's how we bang.

-Shadow

From The Beat: One day, you will look back on this time of your life and wonder how you could have handed over your freedom, first to OGs who tell you what to believe (your causa), and second to this system that you are enriching every time you put yourself into it. One day (before it's too late, we hope), you will recognize that you are your causa, and that every time you put yourself in the hole, you dig it deeper. Open your eyes! Part of the life you've chosen that you failed to describe is the part you're living right this minute, behind thick walls, wearing other boy's drawes, eating when you're told to eat and shutting up when you're told to shut up. And this is play land compared to what lies ahead, unless you have that awakening.

Going Back To School

Here I am back in the halls. I'm really not mad 'cause I'm here on some petty shhh, and I know I'm going back home and continue to go to school and chill with my favorite cousin.

I do most definitely miss my mom and grandmother. They are like my best friend. They keep my on my toes and make sure I go to school.

-Ebbie

From The Beat: We hate to read a piece that begins, "I am back in the halls..." If your mom and your grandmother (to whom you owe so much) keep you on your toes, why are you letting them down by doing the things that allow you to be taken away from them? If you miss them so much, can you imagine how much they miss you?

I'm A Beautiful Prisoner

Baby, if I want yo' men
Baby, fo' sho I could have 'em
I'm light skin, sexy in tha face
I'ma mixed mommy thick in tha waist
Loud out tha face, could take you on a race
Tryna make it to first place
You could never label me base
Neva a gold digga
Just out to get my figgas
Don't mess wit' no broke ninjas

-Mariah

From The Beat: Sounds like you got it all, Mariah. Everything except your freedom...

I'll Tell You

What's up The Beat? Yeah, it's Lil' Leke walk around with the wally. It's me coming out of the unit. I been in here for awhile. That's too long, feel me. I can't wait to get out and smoke a fat one an' get some from my girl, get a job, fix cars and get a education.

-Lil' Leke

From The Beat: We hope you reverse your priorities so that "get an education" gets put at the top of the list. It's the key to staying out of here, or worse. Yes, 41 days of lock-up is a long time, so don't forget the promises you make here, unless you are ready to do even longer!

I'm Go

I am 15 years old and a good boy because I am innocent and get in jail for no reason. I will still do good when I get out and be a good boy!

-Lil' A

From The Beat: Next time, Allen, we want you to write MUCH more than two sentences. We cannot tell much about you from this. We know you say you're a good boy, but what does that mean to you. You say you're here for no reason, so why did the police arrest you? What do you want to achieve in your life? How do you want to achieve it? These are all questions that you should think about and write about in order to be published in The Beat.

Who Am I

Who am I? I am David, aka D-Gotti, and I am a ward of the court. I have been a ward of the court since I was 11 years old, and I really have not been able to see everything in life because I have been savvin out. I caught so many cases now they is tying to hold me until I'm 18 and then they gone send me to 850. So who I am is a juvenile criminal as they see it.

-D-Gotti

From The Beat: Okay, so they see a "juvenile criminal" when they look at you. What do you see when you look at yourself? And how do you plan to move ahead with your life so you won't be seen as an "adult criminal"?

Who I Am

I'ma keep it short, simple, an' plain! I'm hard an' minty like a damn candy cane! You see me in the neighborhood, I ain't nottin' nice, but if you ain't my ninja I'm hella rude. I try, but ninjas still hate. That's why I stay wit' the fam. Late.

-Mario

From The Beat: This is short, all right, and leaves out a whole lot of who you are, like: how did you become the person you are? Why is part of who you are a locked-up child? Why aren't you stayin' with the fam right now?

Fair Warning

Say round. What's poppin' wit' the Beat dawg. Me, man it's the same ol' shhh in here dawg. You know how this punk-ass juvie shhh rocking dawg.

But say, dawg, ah ninja got court in a minute. You know they tryna send me to anothe one of them set-up groupers, ya-dig. But ah ninja probably dash on they ass again and head back to my section, where them animals at. So you know it get spunky dawg.

I can't wait 'til I touch down to cause hell dawg. So if you 'bout it dawg, go all da way dawg, 'cause when young Iggus come thru, it ain't no time outs, ya heard. Fair warning dawg.

But say round, let me hit you right back. Stay down dawg. I keep it poppin' like the 4th of July dawg. Believe that.

-Iggus

From The Beat: It's very obvious that "they" aren't trying to send you anywhere at all because you are doing it all for them. You announce that you'll run from a group home, hit the streets and "cause hell." So let us give you fair warning, dawg. If you do what you say you're going to do, you'll be right back in some slave ship (jail) answering to strangers telling you when and what to eat, wearing some other boy's drawers, and thinking about girls who are nowhere to be found, except in your dreams. That is exactly what you're choosing, so blame no one but yourself if we're right.

Painful Lesson Of Love

Hey, q vole Beat? What it do? Well, today I'ma write kind of like a poem.

Why can't you see what you're doing to me a
And why can't you see dat it's killing me
What happened to da sweet boy I met
You told me you love me, or did you forget
How did you just stop loving me like you said
I thought that I knew you, I thought you were right But
you changed my opinion in one single night The things
you said rip me apart
And now I am left with this hole in my heart
I know that you and I will never be we again
I played your game and misery is da prize I win
I miss all the nights we spent on the phone
The ringing back and forth has stopped
Now I sit here all alone every day, every night
Not even with my son beside me
I hope to hear your voice, but
I've got to accept that you've made your choice
I hope you know that I'll always care
But next time you need me I may not be dere
You just couldn't love me or accept da way I was So now
I gotta find someone else

-Monstrita

From The Beat: There's something else you got out of this experience besides misery, Monstrita, and that's knowledge and experience. We're sorry that this man turned out to be just a boy, but the hole he's left in your heart will fill again with love when you mature into a young woman and meet a mature young man who treasures who you are.

Caught Cheating

I was with my friends and we went to the movies with these girls. I was with a girl that one of my friends put me on with. Then, as we was in the movies, I seen one of my girlfriend's friends. Then, when I walked out the movies, I seen her.

Then all hell broke loose.

-Lil' Cali

From The Beat: We have two questions for you. First, why didn't you go to the movies with your own girlfriend instead of some stranger? And second, why didn't you describe the details of "all hell broke loose" which would have made this a much stronger piece?

Caught Cheating

One day, I was chilling, and I was with this one girl. It was around 3:45 p.m. when school was getting out. She was looking bad. We was macking around the neighborhood in front of Walgreens next to a bus stop. While me and her was handling business, my girlfriend gets off the bus across the street. I told the girl I was with to walk away for a second because I had to make a phone call. So she went into Walgreens to get something.

My girlfriend walks up to me and noticed the two big fat hickies on my neck, and they were still wet looking and fresh. She started to yell at me, and we got into a fight/argument right on the corner. I told her dat she was tripping hard, and they were spider bites, and to shut the hell up with all that bs. She got quiet and I kept on going. "Be happy dat you still talking to me instead of not talking to you!" Then she said, "Forget about it. I still love you," and gave me a kiss. Then she hopped on the bus home.

After all that, the other girl came back out of Walgreens and we just finished where we left off at before dat dumb beezie almost messed our fun up.

-Sleepy

From The Beat: So, you think that because you got away with cheating on someone who trusted and loved you, that she was the dumb one? What goes around comes around, so we wouldn't be so quick to label who was truly dumb in this situation!

What I've Learned

What I learned to stay out of jail is that I should've stayed in school, should've hang out with positive people, should've never smoked when I was with friends, should've never took a drank of liquor, and should've just listened to my parents.

-The Unknown

From The Beat: Even though you've only given us one sentence (!), it's a very full sentence. Every one of these lessons is a good one, but learning lessons and applying them in your life are two different things. How will you put these lessons into daily practice so that we don't see you here again?

I Love You

I love you so much. I know it's so soon, but I'm always thinking of you. I can't keep you off my mind boy. You got me sprung off you. I love you. You just don't know.

I love you so much — your lips, your hands, your feet... and I don't like feet! Your touch, your hugs... Boy I love you but I just can't tell you. So I'm goin' to keep it in. I love you dearly. I don't want you to ever leave me.

Love you always and forever.

-Rina

From The Beat: As we've said before, words of love are a lot easier than acts of love. You say you are always thinking of him, but were you thinking of him when you did whatever it was that led you here and away from him?

From Da Beach

I would tell kids don't use drugs on school days. Also, don't drink and smoke at the same time because you'll really get messed up. Only on New Years and on your birthday.

On my block, stuff goes down. People be fighting and lil' homies hold the cannon. I'm Lil' EZ from North Beach. We be doin' all the shhh on the block. I be blowing fat 'dro every day. New Years, I got really got messed up, I had two 8ths and some Hypnotic and some Cabo Wabo.

I got caught cheating one time but I still go with my girlfriend, though. The other girl left me, but I wasn't trippin' though. But the girl I'm still wit', I love her though, and I ain't never cheated again. But the girl that left me wants me to go to her winter ball on the 18th so I know she still got feelings for me. But the girl I'm wit' really love me and she waiting for me to get out.

Also, I can't wait to get out this place though. I just wanna be back on the block with my big homies.

-Lil' Ez

From The Beat: First, The Beat doesn't want you to write on all the topics. Pick just one, and write a lot more about it. Second, we worry that if all you're focused on is getting back to the block to keep doing what you were doing before, you'll soon be right back in this place you say you want to get out of! Let's keep it real. The only things you're truly able to do now are what the staff let you do or tell you to do. You have given away the very freedom that lets you play like a child on the streets with your homies. If you play the same as before, you will again be giving your freedom away. (Only a fool, an idiot, or a child believes he can do as before without facing the consequences as before.)

RIP Homie

What up wit' The Beat Within? It's ya boy Lil' Ryder. I wanna say RIP to Francisco, aka Lil' Fran. I miss ma OG homie. But his kids keep his name going. Last time we kicked it was when I stole a car and we went mobbin' around tha 'hood for enemies. We did that a lot. I miss him a lot.

Next time I see him in heaven, we'll get cars and mob 24/7.

-Lil' Ryder

From The Beat: So you think heaven is a place where gangsters and thugs get to mob 24/7? That's an interesting notion of heaven. We'd love to know what you think hell must be like... We're sorry that your friend is now gone forever, but it's a reminder of the old saying, "Be careful what you wish for." You wished to find your enemies, and, apparently, Lil' Fran found them. And this is the result.

My Crazy Life

What's up Beat? It's me again. I'm back, same shhh. Tried to stay out, but no, it didn't work.

Well, what I'm about to tell you is some real shhh. In my life I seen a lot of shhh killing, smoking. It's crazy. I live a crazy life. Every day it's crazy. Selling drugs every day making my money, just chilling. But it's crazy but I have a background to just can't say nothing because I'm crazy.

I've seen a lot. I've been through a lot. I've seen people get killed drop to the ground. I've been in a lot of fights, seen blood drop, people just killing each other. It's stupid, but if you live a crazy life, you have to deal with this shhh.

But Beat, talk to you next week. Peace. Much love and respect.

-Sneaky

From The Beat: When we see those words "I'm back," it's clear to us that the choices you're making aren't working for you. We'd be interested in some of the details behind your statement that you "tried to stay out, but it didn't work." How did you try? What specifically didn't work? What would it take to work? If your lifestyle leads to this status of "slave" (even temporarily), then why not make some basic (though difficult) changes? Can you educate us about this?

Hard To Stay Out

When I get out I going to try and stay out, but it's hard for me because I get bad influence around where I lay my head

-Xavier

From The Beat: This really isn't a Beat piece, Xavier. Writing a single sentence is not a piece, and tells us that you're trying to take the easy way, the lazy way. Next time, fill your piece in with details and examples: what kinds of bad influences are you talking about? How can you resist those influences and stay free? Is lock-up worth whatever it is that got you here? Next time, we will not publish such a short piece of writing. Word to the wise...

Back In The Hall

We got brought over here because a little rain and wind messed it up. They was talking 'bout we was goin' back in, like, two or three days, but it's been two weeks now, and they still ain't sure when we're goin' back. But, yeah, being here I thought it was gonna be cool for a minute, but now it really sucks. Makes me wanna hurry up and go back. Cheap ass soap, shampoo, combs, everything, really. I'm gonna be out in a little, but this ain't the place to be. The Ranch ain't either, but it's lightweight better. At least we get to have our own shhh from home.

-Birdman

From The Beat: Isn't it interesting that you can dis one place where you're forced to be because being there is driving you nuts, but when you're stuck in a place you like even less, the first place doesn't seem so bad, right? But isn't the real question about your attitude? What are you going to do to radically change your life on the outs, so when you're free again, you won't get into mess and jacked back inside juvy again?

Laughing All The Way

Me T-house, playa straight up thug, no joke. I once upon a time was little Torrance, but all that changed when I started doing me even harder. You know, real ninjas tell the truth to they ninjas, and staying loyal always will keep ah sq. together. I laugh all the way to the bank on you fake ninjas and am blamin' all the way tell you stank. House way different from the paper and view limousine fool.

Ey, but my money, power, and my respect can't be took, and I ain't gon let nobody take it from me.

-T-House

From The Beat: We really don't know anything about you or what you believe from this kind of silly piece. The one thing we do know for sure, however, is that it's not you laughing all the way to the bank. The cops, DA, judge and POs who earn their living because you put yourself in their power are the ones laughing all the way to the bank. They're grateful to you.

Letter of Knowledge

This yo' boy, Menace! Anyways, I'm writin' this letter to try and get y'all to educate yourselves—not that school shhh, but that real shhh. Like me, for example, I just checked out Al Capone, Cesar Chavez, and a book on the Black Panthers. Learn about the original gangstas and see what they did wrong and what you doing wrong and try and fix that problem. Do a lil' history on the cause you fightin' for and stop takin' in that rotten info. Much love to all.

-Menace

From The Beat: It's terrific that you're reading and educating yourself. But are you curious about what these men did wrong because you don't want to make the mistakes they made, and thereby you intend to keep on doing whatever you do on the outs, but just not get caught? Some of the men on your reading list helped a whole lot of people—like Cesar Chavez fought for, went to jail for, and organized poor, very hard working farm laborers into the United Farm Workers Union. Some Black Panthers fed young children each morning before school in their breakfast programs. How did any of these men inspire you?

What's Up?

No adoro la hermojura que con serlo se basta porque el tiempo desgasta la fragil envoltura. (I don't appreciate beauty because it's not enough, because time erodes its fragile essence.)

This is the Lil' Morro, chillin' in this county an' doing crazy time. I be locked up for seven months, but I don't trip, because I be locked up other times, but I want to tell my homie an' other vatos—stop doing stupid shhh, 'cause I don't want to see my homies locked up and I want to tell the same to my mom, because I got six years I don't see my mom, but I try a make sure when I get out I want to see her, but in the same time is hard for me. Thank you, God, for make my dream fulfilled.

-Lil' Morro

From The Beat: You must be really lonely for your mother. Is there any way, once you're free again, that you can go back to Mexico to visit her, then return to the United States? Will your record in juvy be a problem for you in coming back to California? Can you ask your public defender to find out for you? Once you're out, do you have any plans to get yourself back in school, to get a job and to stop getting into any mess? What have you learned from the time you've spent in juvy and the Ranch, so you will never have to go back?

My Trip To The USA

The Beat Within: Hi, Lil' Morro. Welcome to The Beat. You said you want to talk about your coming to the USA as a young man. How did you come to live here?

Lil' Morro: When I first came to the US, I came from Mexico. I was eleven years old. I came by myself and my brother, by airplane.

TBW: How old was your brother when you came up here?

LM: He was nineteen years old.

TBW: Had your brother been to the US before?

LM: Yes.

TBW: So he went back to Mexico to get you and bring you up here?

LM: Yes.

TBW: Did he help you and buy your ticket?

LM: Yup.

TBW: What was your life like living with your big brother?

LM: I started slanging. I came to jail all the time, I get out, I go back to jail. I did that, like, two, three times. Then my PO try to send me to LCR (Log Cabin Ranch.) Then I go to LCR, but I got out with CPS (Child Protective Services.) Then I was started to live with my girlfriend. Then I was in trouble again. Then I was on the street. Then I did hella shhh. Then I cut off my ankle bracelet. That day I was with my girlfriend, then I left to Oregon. I was there for a month and a half, then I came back.

I was in the same gang as my brother. Then I was happy because I was with my girlfriend and her friends and everything was good. And then the last day I was with my girlfriend and everything is fun because I was all day with her and I was in Starbucks with her, then Dolores Park (in San Francisco), and then I was going to my house. I see my PO and then I try to run but the narcs stop me. Then I came back where my girlfriend was at and then the two narcs went out to the car and my PO run behinds me and stopped the car and my PO and the narcs grabbed me in front of my girlfriend and I was tristing (crying) that day. I was crying because I was really mad, but I tell you, vatos, don't do this stupid shhh because this Lil' Morro is doing time, but he's gonna get out this place.

-Lil' Morro

From The Beat: Maybe the next time you can write more about the rest of your life in the US is like, about your girlfriend, your talents, hobbies, your dreams for the rest of your life when you're free again.

Bad Decisions

What's up beat it's me trouble just wanted to say that there are bad choices in life. Take me for example, I am in here for a bad decision that I made. I want to tell the beat readers to be careful about the choices you make.

-Trouble

From The Beat: What was this 'bad decision' that you made? What happened? Tell us more - and tell us how your next decisions will be better!

I Miss My Mom

I sit in this place every night and think of my family and how much I miss them. I try to call them on the phone. All that makes me wonder is why I did what I did.

Sometimes my mom can't visit me 'cause I have other brothers and sisters she has to take care of. Stuff I wish there was something I can do to make her the proud mother on earth.

-Lil' Downer

From The Beat: You can still make your mama proud. How? You need to stop making bad choices, especially, the ones that put your life and your freedom at risk. Get out and try your best on doing good and make your mama proud - and yourself!

I Want To Accomplish It

Well I'm hoping to get out really soon. I will be heading out to Wyoming. I would be in a group home. I hope I will be able to pass it, so I don't come back to the hall. I know I can do it if I put my mind into it.

I think all I have to do is to stay focused, keep busy and do good in school. I hope I will be able to get home in less than six months if not I'll be writing in The Beat again. I should be gone before this is published if it is published.

-Michael

From The Beat: Don't say that! You won't be writing here again, because we have a feeling that you will make it this time. This is a good opportunity. Don't waste it. You might not be lucky the next time.

Whipped

What's up Beat? One day my homie and me were at the mall. The next thing I know he is chopping it up with some cool ass beezies. he's spitting game at them, and they feeling him too.

Right when he's about to get her number, his lady runs up and blows it up. She made a big ass seen trying to fight them. Like five cops ran up and kicked us out of the mall. She tried to tell him off, but he just walked away.

They broke up. Like twenty minutes later, she called him crying to get back with her! Whipped.

-Monk

From The Beat: In your heart of hearts, do you think he treated her well? Would you do that to a girl? Put her through so much pain and public humiliation? We hope that girl left your homie and found someone who treated her right.

Cowboy Hat and Boots

When I used to live with my aunt, I was about eight, and my little cousin was about two. Now he's seven. He used to do a lot of funny stuff. He had one of those sticks with a horse head on it. He would run around the horse naked with a cowboy hat, and boots with that horse.

-Saint New

From the beat: Those were great times. How is he doing? Is he in a better position than you? Did you still see him a lot before you got locked up? Does he look up to you?

Going to the Ranch

Well, I have gotten a lot of chances but this time they did not give me a chance but I think they should have given me at least one chance. But this time I'm going to the ranch but its all good. But now I'm going to change for my family. Well I'm out Beat

-Lory

From the Beat: We're glad to hear you want to change, but do it cause you want to change. Don't do it for anyone else but yourself. This is your life. Nobody lives it for you. Change because you really feel it in your heart.

Meth

What's up Beat so I'm going to be talking about meth.

I started 4 or 5 years ago

I started to ride and smoking

I started when I was 10 years old.

It was Meth, 24-7.

You know, this is GriFo.

I'm not going to smoke shhh no more.

I've been clean for almost three months.

I know that shhh messes you up a lot.

I've seen a homie got out of it and he hanged himself.

His brother is out of it and now I'm doing time Beat.

-GriFo

From The Beat: All drugs are bad, but meth is like something that was invented by the devil himself. We are glad you want to quit, and we hope you hook up with a program to help you so you never go back to it.

When I Get Out

What up Beat Within it's your homeboy Nino. I am getting out Nov of 2008. I been locked up since June of 2007. It's about time I get out. Everybody thinks I am a screw up 'cause I keep getting locked up. And I am tired of making my mom worry about me. I need to stop making her cry every time I get locked up.

So when I get out I am going to get a job to give my mom money to pay off her bills. I am trying to get off probation so I can do what I want and I won't get locked up but I am going to do right when I get off probation. Well thanks to all you. Well I am out. Much love to you all.

-Nino

From The Beat: Well we're glad to hear that you're getting out and trying to stay outta trouble. Be smart. We don't want to see you come back. Help your mom out as much as you can and make wise decisions. Learn from this experience.

I Always Cheat

This one girl I was going out with along time ago, her and her friend would ask me if I was cheating on her and I kept saying "no." But how they found out was through my other girl before her. After a while, they kept asking me and I got mad and I said yes that I was cheating on her. She started crying, and her friend said that if she cries over a guy again, she's going to beat her ass.

So I felt bad, because I never made a girl cry in front of me until then. So I told her I was playing and that I told her that I said that because she kept on asking me if I was cheating in her. I told her I wasn't but I was. I was going out with her because she always had money. I always cheat.

-Saint New

From The Beat: Why do you think you cheat? Have you ever been lucky enough to be with a girl that you love and respect, who loves and respects you? If you'd ever had that feeling, you'd know that what you've been doing is a waste of time.

Who Am I?

I am a kid. I'm a kid the system (the court) knows nothing about. I think I'm one of the nicest kids in here. If one of my friends owes money to pay rent and they're short, I'll help them, and pay for what they need. I'll go out of my way to pick someone up if they need a ride. I play baseball, go fishing, hunting, camping, wake boarding, snowboarding, all that, and church. The court is dumb to think I'm a bad person and violent person. I'm not, and I hope they can understand that.

-Stark

From the Beat: We believe you when you tell us that you're one of the nicest kids in here, and that counts for a lot. But the court is doing more than judging your character as "bad" or "violent." They are judging you for a specific act, for something you did (or they believe you did), and for who they think you are. And since you know what that specific act was, you also know what specific acts to avoid if you also want to avoid being judged by the courts.

Misperception

Misperception surrounds me in life. I have always been labeled the "funny guy." But not to say I ain't funny at times, I am actually a well-educated, self-motivated writer with the heart of a lion and the pride of a thousand men. Though I have all these view upon me, I tend to just go with the flow and block it out. But sometimes it's hard. I believe in peace and love to the fullest, and have a lot to give to others if they allow me to. But I guess it's up to me if I trust them to handle my emotions.

-Brian

From the Beats: What is a "self-motivated writer" and "well-educated" young man "with the heart of a lion" doing in a place like this? Even more important, what can a young man with these qualities do to keep himself out of a place like this?

All Firme

Q-vo Beats? Well it's this vato once again dropping some linias. This vato had court and got sentenced. I'm going to YA for about one year and six months. I ain't tripping. It's firme. So soon this vato is out.

That's all Beat. This psycho-minded vato is gone. All right, y'all, much respect.

-Lil' Psycho

From The Beats: We sure wish you had told us something about what you're thinking and what you're feeling as you ready yourself for the next stop on your journey. We can tell you this: going to YA is not firme for anyone, and it is worth tripping about. We hope you can avoid the funk inside, because it's a trap to add time to your sentence. Good luck!

Who am I?

Que vole Beat? Well this is Shorty coming out of the honor's unit. Well let me tell you a little about me. Well, my name is Yara and the homegirls call me Shorty, and I have a daughter. Her name is Miriah.

The most important thing is when I go to court the judge doesn't even know me and he thinks I am a criminal. He really don't know nothing about me. All they do is just criticize and talk about where they need to send you.

Well, really I am only doing four months for violation of probation. I'm getting released on April 5 with no probation. But that's still part of my life being away from my baby that I love a lot.

Well Beat, I am gonna let you go. Pues alrato.

-Yara

From The Beat: So Yara, if you were the judge, and someone appeared before you charged with the offences you're charged with, what would be the best way to deal with the situation? Remember, you're the judge, but you also know the real story about the young woman appearing before you. What would you do?

If Love So Nice

Chorus x2

If love so nice

Tell me why it hurts so bad

If love, love so nice

Can you tell me why I'm sad

Verse 1

If I could tell you one time

I wouldn't cheat eva again

'Cause it hurts so bad like a sin

I gotta have some gin

My girl caught m e with some other jaina kissing all up on my chin

Chorus x2

Verse 2

'Cause, Baby Girl, you that one and only one

Dat I desire

But I cheated on you and broke

And I did you shady

And ripped your heart apart like a shark

-Giant Samoa And Clumzy

From The Beat: Is it "love" that hurts so much, or the fear that you're going to lose that love because you cheated? It's like anything else... everything we do (and everything we don't do) has consequences. The pain lies in having to face them.

Who Am I?

Who am I? Hmmm, me? I'm just your average lil' homie. I was born and raised in San Jose. I'm hella young but it's already my fourth time in here and I'm on my way to the ranch. I've made a lot of mistakes, but I don't regret any of 'em, because my mistakes taught me how to keep my head up and never let anybody bring me down. Well, that's me, 'till next time. Late!

-War Soldier

From The Beat: Being able to learn from your mistakes is so valuable, but don't you have to see the decision as a bad one to know you don't want to repeat it? Is this different from regret?

Bad Thing

What's up Beat, it's me "Trouble". Just want to say that there are bad choices in life. Take me for example. I am here for a bad decision that I made. I want to tell The Beat readers to be careful about the choices they make.

-Trouble

From The Beat: That's advice we all need to take.

Ranch Bound

What's crackin' Beat, it's Robert from the beautiful streets of Gilroy. Once again I am in this unit. Well Beat, this is probably the last time I'll be able to write in The Beat, 'cause I'll be leaving for the ranch next week.

So, I'm not feeling today's topic so I'm gonna write 'bout me going to the ranch. Well Beat I will be going to the ranch again for the second time. The first time I ran, but this time I going to James andt this time I won't mess up.

I am going to do my program, so I can get out and be with my family and quit living my life in here 'cause this isn't what I want. So, to all in here stay up and do your program so you can get out. It ain't worth messing up so stay up.

-Robert

From The Beat: There's nothing more powerful than knowing what you want. Some people spend their whole lives trying to figure it out. We guess the next step is deciding how will you stay out of the system. Sounds like you've got a family and some friends that can help.

Stereotypes

What's up Beat? Today I am gonna write about stereotypes. People always stereotype Asians about being nerdy, rich, and bitches. I think it's not true. Just 'cause you see that shhh on TV doesn't mean that's how it is in real life.

Hollywood makes assassins look nerdy, never winning, never getting the girl. You ever notice when you're watching TV and movies you never see an Asian as the main character. I bet no one that reads this can name 5 Asian celebrities off the top of their heads besides Jackie Chan and Jet Li and they're not even actors.

The whole time I've been in Juvenile Hall people expect me to be smart and a nerd. But that's not true. I grew up poor as hell, and around Asian gangs since I was hella little. I bet I've done more things than most people in this room have even seen. It's cool though. I bet if I told someone to their face the shhh I did, they wouldn't believe me. Anyways, I know some Asian are nerds, but there are some Asian gangsters out there. Just 'cause Hollywood makes us look like one thing doesn't mean it's true.

-Xnotoriousviet

From The Beat: You're right about both things you mention. First, society makes a lot of assumptions about people based on appearance and race is absolutely part of that appearance. Second, Hollywood often supports and exacerbates these assumptions because filmmakers want to show people what they expect and what they want to see. You have every right to be angry. How do you set people straight when they wrongly assume things about you? AS for assuming you to be a gangster, we hope you are up to breaking that stereotype! By the way, did you know actor, Keanu Reeves is half Chinese American? Here's four more Asian actors, Joan Chen, Bruce Lee, Gong Li, and Russell Wong.

Text That

I remember when I was with my ex-girlfriend. We were together for over a year, and I started talking to some other girl. Why? I have no idea why. I know that I really loved and cared about her, but for some reason I still did it. I remember that day I got caught. For some reason I gave her my phone and let her take it.

Later that day she asked me who's this other femal? I said, who's that? She said, It's the girls that's texting you, calling you Babe. We argued, she cried and asked why? We broke up. She gave me another chance, but she never trusted me the same.

-Junior

From The Beat: Everyone does things that make them look back and wonder "why?" Your story is a good example of how when some things break, they can't get put back together again. Do you regret your decision, or do you just consider it part of a learning experience?

Just Saying What's Up

What's up with it Beat? Well what's on my mind is my carnal (brother). He came back again. I am very disappointed in him, but, oh well.

Well Beat, I have five months left in here. My time is going by very slow.

I miss my boyfriend Armando.

I feel very anxious to get out and finish my 10 days of probation. I get out June 10th and I get off probation on my birthday, June 20.

Well Beat, that's all for now. To the homies - keep your heads up and don't let anyone get you down. Late.

-Payasa

From The Beat: Here's our favorite answer to those of you who say the time is going by slowly: read a good book. When you're reading a good book, time speeds up - especially as you near the end of it. You want time to slow way down when you approach the ending of a good book. You want it to go on forever. The good news is that you will never run out of good books. So, read Payasa, read!

Learning

I guess I got to learn the hard way.

Thinking that life is a joke, that all I have to do is play. I thought jumping out running that I could surely get away.

But the cops ended up catching me in jail the next day. Now I'm sentenced to what seems a lifetime doing six to eight.

Missing out on my daughter's smiles and her most precious days.

Sitting in my cell, mad cause I can't kiss her face. There's nothing I can do, but my time, just sit and wait.

I guess this is God telling me I have to learn the hard way.

-Phat Boi

From The Beat: Wow, you really see you time in the hall as a lesson. Even though it's hard to miss out on your daughter's life, at least you've got something amazing to go home to, something that can maybe keep you from coming back. We think many guys don't have it so lucky.

Putt Putt

My lil' brother - we call him Putt Putt. He cracks me up because he's only two and be muggin' people. He already knows who he like and don't like. Like if he don't like you and you pick him up he gon' look at you like put me down and then hit you or if you got some food and he want some he gone smack you and take it. Haha.

-Kanesha

From The Beat: Hey, that won't be funny forever. Little ones learn by example. Are you prepared to give him a good example?

My Funny Nephew

The story I'm going to write about is my nephew. My nephew is only four years old and he has done some pretty funny stuff. One time when he was two years old, I was giving him a bath and he ate the soap. And then he burped out a bubble. It was funny.

-Joseph

From The Beat: Your nephew has strange tastes. What's he eating these days, now that he's an old boy of four?

A Teen On The Block

Sellin' coke, weed, pills

Whatever I got

I can't stop

Getting money is a must

I need this money

Like a young woman need lust.

I would rather ride

Your girl car

Instead of riding the bus.

I refuse to lose

So I'm gonna forever get money

I done paid my dues

Plus you can't hear my tummy.

It started out just for

Fun takin' drug money

Was a young dummy

But you couldn't take none from me.

I know it's a harsh reality

But it's something that I gotta see.

- Fantastic

From The Beat: What are the "dues" that you've paid? It's true that many people have to live this kind of "harsh reality," but what do you give up when you choose to live it? What does the life give you that makes it's harshness worth while?

Who Am I?

What's up Beat? Well it's me again...

I am a sad clown...

I am very lonely...

I want my freedom...

I want to be out with the homies...

I miss all ..

I miss running the streets...

I feel satisfied with my ways...

I feel like nobody cares...

I have to finish my time here...

I have five months left...

I will keep my head up...

I will get out someday

I am a sad clown...

-Payasa

From The Beat: We don't believe you when you say "I feel satisfied with my ways..." Everything else you say contradicts that. You will get out someday. But who will you be when you get out? What will you have learned? And what will you do differently? If you aren't ready to change, you risk a rapid return to these halls, or worse. We know you know these things. But at what point are you ready to say - "OK, show me what I need to do. Teach me. I'm ready." Help is in the wings, waiting for you. It can't solve all your problems, but shout out, ask for help. You'll be surprised how many people really do care about you. And let us know how you're doing. We'll be waiting, and ready to print what you've learned.

What Is Bad? Puffing Non-Stop

Maryjane is pretty bad for me. I smoke a lot of Maryjane. I know it's bad for me but I still seem to keep puffing on that beautiful plant. As soon as I wake up I blaze, then after breakfast I puff some more. My routine seems to be my reason for getting locked up so much. I hope you enjoyed my story.

-Mike

From The Beat: What's to enjoy about a boy being locked up for polluting your lungs and it's robbing you of your freedom?

I'll Tell You Who I Am

I am an eighteen-year-old Hispanic kid, full of tattoos on my face, neck, and body. When people see me they think that I been to prison. I'm tired that when people look at me they think I'm going nowhere and that I'm a low-life and that I'm going to end up in prison, but underneath all these tattoos and the way I dress, I'm a good kid that makes the wrong choices some times.

-M

From The Beat: What is it about society that wants to put people into categories of "good" and "bad" based on how they look? Many times in this world it can feel like we are "guilty until proven innocent" instead of the other way around. Sounds like you will have to prove to society that you are the good person that we know you are. How will you do it?

G-Rides

GTAs is not coo'.

So think before you do it
and not act a foo'.

Don't hop in the car
with all your homies,

and do things

and get caught by the police.

So think about the ride.

You can't go back

and change the time.

-T

From The Beat: No, we sure can't. It would be awfully crowded in the past if we could.

Who Am I?

Who am I? You already must know! I'm a child of

"God," a seed on earth.

Seeing and breathing since the day of birth.

I am like no other girl, just me.

A place old persons stay walking the streets.

I'm a person of wisdom, a drug pusher that stay strong
never weak.

I stand my ground, no matter where I be.

I'm street smart - never run from the police,

but I know this isn't all I can be.

Who am I? I'm a person waiting change,
'cause livin' on and in the street will leave you money, or
hurt,

messin' wit them streets ninjas.

Who am I? A regular human being who hopes to change
and escape the streets,

because this isn't the person I really want to be.

It's who I know how to be - one-hundred-per-cent gamed
up when I'm in these streets. Who am I? Not yo' average
motha, but I'll never be a sucker.

-Boss Hogg

From The Beat: We know you're smart and also street smart. But it doesn't take much to read between the lines here, your lines, and realize that you aren't happy. What to do about the situation you find yourself in is the real question. It sounds like you don't have a home to go to. We don't know that for sure, but it feels that way. If that's so, there are people and organizations that can help, but you have to be willing first, to accept the help, and second, to give up a lot of the behavior you're used to. Are you ready to take those steps? Are you ready to seek and accept help?

My Poor Girl

My letter of knowledge I would write is to my girlfriend.

She has always been there for me regardless of my situation. I've been in jail more than a few times and she never left me. I've put her through every bad scenario from cheatin', to break ups, etc. and she's still here and I'm always in her debt for that. Words will never be able to express how I feel for her. I will love her in this life and the next.

-Tanielu

From The Beat: Nothing can replace having someone to count on in your life. Sounds like this person is truly part of your family. How do you show her how much she means to you? Many would have left you quickly, after you cheated on them.

What Wouldn't I Do For Money

Fellow inmates, it just so happens that The Beat has asked a question that's been on my mind: what wouldn't I do for money. My answer is that I'd never be a prostitute because out there in these times it's ugly having that kind of occupation. You'd be running into death, everyday.

I know some females right now who are ready all day, and I ask them all the time why they risk their lives. They tell me they like prostitution because it's good, fast money. And I look straight at these girls with nothing to say but "damn". These girls are serious about boppin' me, but I couldn't see it, myself. My selfesteem is too high, you feel me. I ain't gonna be rippin' and runnin' around town for some dough.

I'm gonna make it to the top and be somebody. Haters just gonna watch me shine. Make sure you make the right decision on how you will get money for the rest of your life. Hopefully, it's the right way. I know which way I'm going. Goodnight, Beat readers.

-Phatty

From The Beat: Good decision Phatty. You're right about the danger those young women face. By the way, any ideas on what you'll be doing as you make your way to the top?

Untitled

What up Beat? Me, still here locked up, just waiting to get out. Kind of sad because my PO told me that she wants to send me to the ranch. Damn, I don't want to go - especially because I'm pregnant, and the other thing is that she told me something that got me so mad. She wants to take me away from my mommy. That's screwed. It's not right. I'm just gonna wait to see.

Damn, hopefully I get out, I hella want to just be out and do my thing. If I get out I'm do better. I'm not gonna be all like whatever. I'm do good. Hopefully my PO don't do that. I don't know what I would do. I'm so use to being out and being with my family and it's like damn, I won't be the same. I asked her to give me another chance but she said that she has given me hella chances. It's true, but this time I know and I'm positive that I'm do hella good. Not just for me, but for my mommy.

I pray to the Lord that He hears my prayers and helps me get out of this pain. Well, that's all for today. Much love to all.

-Candy Girl

From The Beat: So, if you've been given all those chances, why didn't you take advantage of them? Why should your PO believe you now when you blew so many chances? How can you convince her that this time is different? And why is it different? You have to be able to answer these questions if you hope to change her mind, and get one last chance.

This Year And Last

2007 I went through a lot but it's like I always say I have no regrets ever with things that happened to me in my past. It made me the person I am today. And now all I can do is look at 2008 and make better choices because my life is going to change, 'cause my son will be born in April of 2008 that is going to be my angel sent from above to change my life, so good bye 2007 and what's good 2008?

-Mona

From the beat: We hope that it's all good for you in 2008, and for your son. But we want to know what you will do to make sure that your son has a better chance at a good life than you've had. Would you want your son to be living the life that you and his daddy have led, or do you have something else in mind for him?

If I Had A Dad

If I had a dad, everything would be different. One day I am going to go find him. I really want to meet him. I'll have to go to a prison to find him. I have to talk to my uncle to find which one he's at.

The reason I want to meet him is that I think I would look at life differently. I also want to meet him because I've heard he can draw really good and that he's a professional tattoo artist.

I don't care what he did in the past. I know he messed up. He's done things I could never think of, but I think it would help both of us out if we knew each other. He would think differently because he knew he had a son. He might change and maybe come home to his children. I have to go. See you later Beat.

-Baby Mondo

From The Beat: Wanting to know your dad is a natural desire. We hope your uncle will help you find him. We do think it's important to keep your expectations in check. You don't know him and he doesn't know you. It would be wise for you to decide well in advance of meeting him that no matter what, you are going to take care of yourself and pursue the kind of life that a decent person deserves. If you can, over time, build a healthy relationship with your dad, that will be good for both of you. But if it turns out, for whatever reason, that that's not possible - you must not give up on yourself. Healthy relationships are built on trust and reliability. No matter what they say, blood is not necessarily thicker than water. Love and respect and reliability matter more than blood.

Who Am I?

I am laughter
I am sound
I try not to frown
I am tall
I try to stay out of light
I am smiles
All over the world
One day I dream to have a lil girl
I am proud
I am smart
One day I will restart
I am beautiful
I am black
I hope people don't think I'm wack
I am strong
I am k-nasty
I'm never ashy
I am flashy
I am classy
I will never be trashy
I am the beast
From the east
Females aint got nothing on me

-Kanesha

From The Beat: You are many things. Are you also a quick learner? Have you learned that certain lines cannot be crossed without consequences? Are you ready to return to the safe side of that line?

Who Am I???

I'm Kandi... sometimes I'm silly and sweet!
But don't get me wrong. I'm not weak.
I never run but I will seek....
Fashion is me. What can I say - I love to look good.
I love to be different. I got my own style.
I'm a trendsetter, a franchise in these streets....
Look at me - I'm a star. I'm loved by many haters. Keep coming.
Money is me. I'm hungry like a wolf. I need, I need, but no money, no problem.
That's why I'm here. Money hungry ain't no joke, but here... that's just me....
I'm a beast.... I smash, I flash in south, west, east 'cause can't nobody stop me from eatin', not even this system.
I'm too humble. I'm too hungry.
I need to eat up these streets, and hey, what can you say?
If you slip, you gonna fall. That's you, not me.

-Kandi

From The Beat: Well, you do sound rather notorious, but some trees are all bark. What kind of tree are you? And what kind of tree would you like to be? You say you have an appetite for asphalt. What's the tastiest street for dessert? And do you like a little sidewalk on the side?

Savage

I am a savage. I think
A savage is a person
That doesn't care what
People think about him.
People tell me what to
Do all the time. But I don't
Listen. That's what I think
Savage is!

-Aok

From The Beat: You and the dictionary are getting ready to duke it out. Get a head start on the battle by sneaking a look at the word while the dictionary is asleep. It's tricky though. If you wake a sleeping dictionary, there's no telling what could happen.

Words From Brian

I got vocabulary all day. People try to piece together the puzzle I present. Put it this way — they failed me from the Ranch for “indirect suicide attempt” — for a poem I wrote. It’s a poem I got POW for in The Beat.

-Brian

From The Beat: Do you mean, Brian, that you wrote a poem that we designated as a POW, and the system took it as an indirect suicide attempt and you had to face some consequences for it? If so, we’re sorry if we put you in that position. At the same time, we would hate it if you really were making an “indirect suicide attempt.” We don’t want you to get into any deeper problems with this, but we’re still curious about what this means for you.

Chances

Q-vole Beat? Well its me the one and only, but never lonely Payasa. I’ve been locked up too many times already and they have given me lots of chances.

My first time that I got locked up I was only twelve years old I got locked up for fighting. My probation officer was trying to send me to the ranch, but my judge gave me a chance on house arrest. I was at home doing good but about two days later I cut off the monitor to go kick it with the homies.

I got locked up for about one month. Later then they kept on giving me chances, and I kept on messing up.

When I was fifteen, they finally sent me to the ranch. I got out and I was doing all right until I got locked up again, and again.

This time is going by quick and I only have five months left, well got to go, keep your head up.

-Payasa

From The Beat: What have you learned from these chances? You do know there is a limit to the ‘chances’. We’re guessing you’re pretty close to it. How deep into the system are you prepared to go? Have you been reading the pieces at the back of The Beat. We call it The Beat Without, but most of the pieces are written by folks who are deep within the system. Their message to you is that it’s not a pleasant place, that there’s nothing noble about it. They don’t want you to get there. They’re the real experts. Listen to them. Take heed.

You Think You Know

Who am I? That’s a good question. I’m Michael, and I’m a person who never gives up, and always stands by my family. People judge me because of the way I dress and automatically assume that I’m a bad guy and that I don’t get to know who I can really be. I know that I made some bad choices and that’s why I’m here – getting my time over with.

When I get out, I promise my family – especially my lil’ brothers – that I’ll change.

-Fat Mike

From The Beat: People judging others is a fact of life and we think you are brave to stand up to it, but there is also wisdom in picking your battles. Like maybe think about dressing up for a job interview or to help show someone that you think might be cool that people aren’t always what they seem.

Call Me Charlie

I’m Charlie, but everybody knows me for my own shhh, or the ninja to go to if he needs anything. Some people think that I’m a ladies man, but they try to do me – so for all you people out there fakin it – keep it solid. And to everybody that knows me: Keep your heads up. I’m coming from Oakland where its no joke and this is nothing.

-Charlie

From The Beat: Who you are seems pretty slippery here ... hard to pin down. I wonder what would it would sound like if you just wrote honestly about who you were, your likes, dislikes, etc for a whole page. Maybe next time.

Tomorrow

What’s crackin The Beat Within!

Well, guess what? Im leaving tomorrow to the ranch, finally, so I can do my 6 to 8 months. I’ve been waiting since November 19, 2007. Tomorrow is the day! I can’t wait! So everybody in juvenile hall - stay up and take care. Love you.

-Bianca

From The Beat: Happy ranching Bianca.

Talk About Chances

I have had many chances in life. My first chance was when I was two months old. I was at my grandma’s house and my dad pushed me out of a window and I fell, but I never hit the ground. My grandma was outside hanging sheets and stuff on the line, and I landed in her laundry basket. The sad part is I can’t remember it for myself.

-Axel

From The Beat: This is an amazing story, Axel. How many times has your grandmother told you about it? You’re a lucky guy just to be alive. We love this story.

Family

My family been through hella shhh. We been through everything together and we still going to stay together ‘cause life is hard without family. Family always got your back whenever you in trouble or in need. Especially my family, they always got my back to the fullest. So always keep your family.

-Mookie

From The Beat: A family like that is worth it’s weight in gold and we think the advice is right on. All families have to get through hardship together, which is maybe what makes the bond between them so strong. Do you ever let your family know how much you need them?

Last Chance

The last chance I got to see my grandma was November 30th, 2007 when the cops picked me up on a warrant at my house. They wouldn’t let me say goodbye to her. She passed away on December 5th, 2007. Rest peacefully Sue Carolyn Knight. I love you grandma. Sorry for not being a better grandson.

-M

From The Beat: We are sorry for your loss, but we bet she knew how much you loved her.

Untitled

What’s wit you Beat? Its me, Giggles, coming out of this unit, waiting to get the hell out of here ‘cause it’s hella boring. I will be leaving in about two and a half weeks to go to the ranch. Yup, but at least I won’t be the only one.

My brother Maddog and my brother in-law will be going to the one in Gilroy. But ya, I just can’t wait.

It sucks being in here. It’s my fault for making the stupid mistakes I did. I can’t blame no one.

Stay up and be coo’, aigh. Alrato Much love and respect to my family. I love you guys.

-Athina

From The Beat: We get the sense that you want to move on, and that you acknowledge that you’re in the hall because of your own “stupid mistakes”, as you call them – but what have you learned? You’re going to the ranch for eight months, and then what? Sounds like you have close relatives who are also in trouble. So the “fam bam”, as you call them, might not be able to provide you with the support you need. And if this is so, what’s your plan to putting your life together? Who can help you? And are you ready for help? Just a few things to think about that we here at Beat Central offer for your consideration.

A Day In The Life

Don't act like no one told you,
about this white soldja,
always puffin' on some doja,
catch me at Econos,
chuggin' on some bottles,
and a gap blunt wrap,
so you know what's up wit' that,
so I mob back,
all the way to golf drive,
holdin' down my hood,
up to no good,
then go and find my lady,
and make some scratch,
'cause I'm that G,
Ever body turns out to be,
But other then that
I'm a nice smooth guy.

-Gilbert

From The Beat: Gilbert, this piece shows off your prowess with writing, but it doesn't really show off much about your mind state. It's pretty pathetic. Meaning you are proud of things that will keep you down. You are locked up but still repping the block - do you want your life to change or do you see this time being locked up just a temporary moment of rest?

Friends

Hey Beat, I'm not feeling this topic. I've been having a lot of thing on my mind. I just wanted to talk about my friends and my family.

I have good friends that I miss. There are friends in my life that are going away - one's going to CYA, the other one is going to the ranch, and one is still fighting his case. They have been gone for a year. To my friends: I just want them to know that I miss them, and if I could, I want to tell them to keep their heads up.

-Viet Boi

From The Beat: Wow, sounds like your friends all went in different directions. It seems like your heart is still with them and that whatever happens, you will remain friends.

Funny Baby Story

My son Anthony is the cutest baby in the world. No really he is! He has the biggest smile in the world. He could even brighten up Grumpy from Snow White. And I remember one time my brother had a Scion toy car that was big enough for my son to ride on. He sat on the car and my brother drove it and my son had so much fun that he decided to take control of the car and crashed it. He was laughing so hard he got the hiccups.

-Lil' Sapita

From The Beat: It is nice to hear a happy story from you. We hope that you and your son are reunited soon.

Young And Foolish

What up Beat? Well, first things first. Hopefully, when these firme lines find you - I hope you are in the very best of health and spirit. Well, this has to be a Chicano from San Jose. And the name is Monstro.

Anyways the topic I choose is "who I am." I'm a solid homeboy. I'm a friend you can trust. You disrespect me - you get slapped up. I'm a Chicano, more like a criminal. I smoke bud, do drugs, and proud of it. Just 9 or 10 more months and I'm gone like the wind.

-Monstro

From The Beat: You start this piece off with blessings to your reader and calling yourself a solid homeboy, but then you say you are proud of doing drugs and being a criminal. Hmmm?

Stereotypes

I'm a white boy and proud of it. I don't use drugs and I don't drink. That's all falls into the white boy stereotype.

- Gregg

From The Beat: Is that true? That white boys are thought to be square? What is interesting about this is that white people have less stereotypes associated with them than other minorities - unless they themselves are the minority.

2008 is here

Seemed like '08 would never come, and now that's it is here where did all the time go? I miss my freedom and now when I get out half of the year is going to be gone by then I would only have six months to enjoy this year but its cool I did it to myself, to bad, so sad I guess well I hope that this year fly's by so that I could be out soon and enjoying my freedom like a wicked clown that I am.

To all keep your head up.

-Payasa

From the beat: Time to give up the clown stuff. Gangsta clowns go down. Do you really want to spend your life in prison?

My Year

Year 2008 - this is my year off top

I've been locked up since 2005.

That's a cool min. but I'm about to be free.

I'm eighteen years old and I got a lot to

My 2008 to do list is switch my style up

'cause you know I like to dress to impress and take care of my girl.

Gain my moms trust back

Don't fall back using drugs,

Go to college and get my own spot, so that's my 2008 I'm out.

-Cupcake

From the beat: Are you involved in a recovery program? It's tough to do it on your own. Getting help when you need it is a sign of strength and maturity. It says that you are not into fooling yourself, or anyone else. You can regain your mom's trust and you can get into college, and stay there, if you deal with your issues. Let us know what's happening. We love to print success stories.

Goals

I would like to set my life on track. Once I get out tomorrow, I want to find out about my jobs. I want to go to job corp., and if it's a possibility stay there. Maybe go to SJSU for college. But I really want to go to WYO tech for diesel mechanics.

I really want to stay out of trouble and never come back again. I want a girl I can rely on, and depend on. Maybe have a nice family.

- Jose

From The Beat: These sound like really, really good goals. It is rare to hear a young man of your age talk about wanting a good girlfriend that he can depend on. It's very heart warming.

Cheating

Well damn, what can I say? Recently my lady just got caught cheating on me - with my own supposedly homegirl. I seen my lady and she acts as if I don't know about it. But I love her so much. People make mistakes and I will never leave her no matter what. I forgive her for what she did.

-Bianca

From The Beat: Forgiveness is a gift to both parties. Remember, forgiveness means letting go of the pain, too.

I'll Tell You!

What up, Beat? Well, I'm going to start up by saying that I'm a solid as homeboy that is in a gang, and once you're in there there's no way out. Well, I also know that I'm a savage-ass guy and the cops know and they love to stop me for no reason just for walking down the street, wearing no colors, just because they want to mess with me. Well Beat – stay up.

-PW

From The Beat: This is a really interesting piece because you are talking about your strength, even though you are not in a gang. It seems like around here people are judged only by their colors and even though you don't bang – you are trying to prove your worth. Whereas it seems that in other places people would try to prove their worth by saying they have nothing to do with gangs.

Cheated On

I got with my boyfriend through his ex-girlfriend. Yeah, I know that's kind of weird. But anyways, we were together for a month. I only saw him twice, but we always talked on the phone and I fell in love with him really fast.

My homegirl took me to see him and he had a hickey on his neck he denied it and said it was from his brother choking him. I knew he was lying, but I still stayed with him. But finally I told him – straight up – to tell me the truth. He did cheat on me and it was with his ex girlfriend and the sad part was she had a man and she was pregnant. Lol.

-Mousey

From The Beat: It seems like when you are in a relationship that began with an infidelity, it is hard to ever trust that person. But sometimes, if you really love someone than jealousy can be overcome.

She Cheated On Me With My Cousin

My girlfriend, who I was with me, cheated on me with my cousin when I was locked up. She said that she only oral sex. The weird thing was that I wasn't mad at her, or at my cousin.

She doesn't know that her sister and two of her friends did the same thing to me. And I told her when I found out about it and I felt sorry for cheating on me. The reason why she cheated on me was because supposedly my cousin reminded her about me.

-CD

From The Beat: You both did the wrong thing. But why would you feel bad if you did the same thing? Be careful with the things you say and the things you'll do. Wait until you feel in love. That's why we had to cut the last sentences out. You can get into a lot of trouble by saying the things you said.

A Funny Thing

Well, today's topic is about something funny I seen.

I remember when I was young, my homeboy and I were playing football in the middle of the street. Some kid wanted to play with us too, so we let him. He thought he was hella good, so I threw the ball hella far and he was running in full speed and one of his feet got caught on the tire of a car.

It was hella funny because he fell face first. My homie and I were laughing for days. Hell that's all I could think about. Gone!

-J-A

From The Beat: Ouch. So you were laughing at him even though he must have been in serious pain, plus being seriously embarrassed? Why do we laugh at people when they're hurting, instead of trying to help them? Has it ever happened to you that people laughed at you when you were in pain?

Who Am I

My name is Lil' Ezzy. I was born and raised in Gilroy. I like to chill with the homeboys and drink and see what's crackin' for the day. I'm a cool as a homegirl and I respect ones who respect me. I love having fun, but most of all I just tell it as it is. What can I say? That's just me. Hate it or love it.

-Lil' Ezzy

From The Beat: Another straight shot from Lil Ezzy – thanks for sharing about who you are. Keep up the good writing.

Cheating

What's up Beat? Well, my name is Candy and I've never cheated on anyone. But my story is kind of different.

There's this guy that I'm so into and were like friends with benefits. He's my one and only, if ya know what I mean. Until this one night I got super drunk and some shhh went down with my ex-boyfriend. It's not considered cheating c'ause me and my one and only ain't together, but inside I felt like I messed things up. 'Cause if my one and only went with some other girl, I would be trippin' hard.

Yeah, we ain't together but like I said, he is my number one and I can't see myself with no other. So is it considered cheating even if you were just friends?

-Candy

From the Beat: Well Candy, it certainly sounds like you don't feel like this guy is just "your friend." And you told us that if he found out that you were with your ex, he would be jealous, too. Perhaps it is time for you two to be honest about your feelings towards each other.

Savage

I am a savage I think. A savage is a person that doesn't care what people think about him. People tell me what to do all the time but I don't listen that's what I think is a savage. Your boy,

-Savage

From The Beat: It's good to be independent. But do you care what your family thinks of you? Do you care what the people you respect think of you? Most of all, what about how you think of yourself?

A Family to Take Care Of

What up Beat" This is your homie. Some people think that I'm just another youngster out in the streets or another gang member in the system. But I'm more than that. I have a family and a little niece to take care of. But when people see me or think of me they forget that I also have a family to take care of. But I'm here in Juvenile Hall serving time for a couple GTA charges.

I never thought that I would be in here but I got caught up. I am a son of a wonderful mom that treated me good through all the wonderful fifteen years of my life. She has been through hell on earth with me and she still is there.

I cussed at her and done a lot of things to hurt her and I still hear the best words a mom could call you "son". I am also an uncle a very proud one, because I have the most wonderful niece and nephew that make me smile through my cloudiest and sunniest days since they were born. That's who I am.

-Solo

From The Beat: Stay on that love for your family for a minute, because it shines through this piece a diamond in the sand. That's the true you, that's where your heart is – all this other BS, with the car stealing and the affiliations, that's just surface stuff, stealing you from the real you. How will you fight it?

Taking A Look At Me

What do you see when you look at me

You see a gangsta

But what about times when you ain't with me

Those times when I tickle fight my lil' sista

What about days when I stay at my pad

I ain't out there bustin' slugs at rivals

Those mellow days you know we all have

That are necessary for life's survival

You ever seen me in pain with tears in my eyes

2007 was a time ticking bomb

Last year God sent me an angel from the skies

When he delivered to me my mom

I've been through hell and I've seen that end

And I know where this life's gonna lead

I've seen homeboys high and I've seen homeboys dead

Unfortunately that's just the way that it be

So think about your future and your family that loves
you

Think about the chances you been given

Think about your homies, right now thinking of ya

And flip a bitch on that path, down which you've driven

- FiftyOneFifty

From The Beat: This poem really speaks to the double-standards that people may have about juveniles in detention. It really pushes us to think more about the double-standards and stereotypes we hold about others. The poem also encourages people to change their lives and really work toward keeping themselves out of trouble. What do you think you can do to change stereotypes? Do you think that simply by changing your ways that would help change people's minds about youth in detention?

My Funny Nephew

The story I'm going to write about is my nephew. My nephew is four years old and he has done some really funny stuff. On time when he was two years old I was taking him a bath and he always throwing water at me and he always used to eat soup. One time when he ate the soup he burped out the bubble it was funny.

-Joseph

From The Beat: That is funny. He sounds like someone you wouldn't want to be a way from... when will you see him again? Does he ask about you when you're locked up?

In My Life I Made Some Bad Choices

What's up Beat? In my life, I made some bad choices, like doing drugs. It ain't good. Anyways I'm locked up in the hall. When I'm in here, I'm knowing that I ain't gonna be like that anymore. I know that it's hard to stop now.

I ain't gonna do any of that stuff. I told this to my mom and my brother too. When I get out I'm going to tell my brother to stay out of trouble and I'm going to help my mother not to do anymore drugs.

My mother told me she was going to a rehab for me to get out from this boring locked up stuff. I don't like it that much. Hopefully I'll get out soon and I'll see my family. I'm always thinking about my family. Showing much respect!

-Pablo

From The Beat: Maybe you should try a rehab as well. Rehab has helped many people of all ages. If you think you can't stop, there are professional programs that can help you with your problem. Sometimes, people need a little push from other who are here to help. Good luck for you and your mother. Support each other at any price to make things right.

I Just Need One More Chance

Beat, I just need one more chance but I guess its too late, because my PO don't want to give me another chance.

I just need one more chance for me, I'll do good. I know I can do it because I really wanna do it.

I am tired of being here. On the year 2007 I was only out for two weeks, when I met a lot of girls. And now I am here. I prefer to be there with the girl than stay here. It's too late because I going to be placed in a home in L.A. But until next time I'm out.

-Pinzon

From the Beat: It's never too late! It's never too late to decide to stop getting in trouble. You wanna be outta jail but you wanna keep doing shhh that bring you to jail. You can't do both, you know that from experience. So what if you look at this time in LA as a chance to start over completely?

Cheating

Q-vole Beat? Pues, it's me again your homie Smokey. Pues, the topic from today is "cheating"!

Hey pues, let me tell you about my story. Pues, it went like this. I had a firme hyna (pues, that's what I think I had) Hey, pues, this hyna I had told me hella shhh, that she loved me and she wanted to be with me and she wanted to have a kid with me and more bullshhh things she told, so I believed her.

And pues, I fell in love with her and also I got her name tattoo in my right hand, but one day I found out that she was kind of cheating on me with my best homie, and that homie was like my brother. So we broke up and pues la neta the true (truth) I don't really believe in hynas anymore.

Oh also I got a tattoo on my neck that says "F... love" but that don't mean that I don't got love for my family. Chale, I can't even trust my homies from my varrio anymore.

Hey pues, that's it Beat, oh pues, one more thing! I lost a best homie and a hyna but I'm not trippin' 'cause like my homie Stomper said, "easy come, easy go." If you all vatos and hynas know what I mean. "Alrato and don't let nobody get you don't!" There's no real homies in this world only your family! God bless everyone.

-Smokey

From The Beat: We've all been hurt by people we thought cared about us and we're sure a lot of us have also had a boyfriend or girlfriend cheat on us. Is that really a reason to give up on love, though? Should we let one bad experience ruin all of our experiences? While sometimes our family really are the only people we can trust, we also need friends and significant others to help balance out our lives.

I Want To Get Out Of Here

Q-vole Beat it's me your homie Serio coming from the hall. Well, let me tell you my story I'm living right now. Well I'm going to court in a few weeks so hopefully I get released because my Jefita already wants me home.

And I want to spend some time with my family because I haven't seen my mom in three months and I want to let her know that I miss her too. But I want to get out of here so I could go kick it with my varrio. But anyways, I want to do good so my jefa could be proud of me and so I could be free like I use to be. When I first started but I miss my homies out there but you know how my crazy life is but I'll see you guys later.

-Serio

From The Beat: Ain't nothing wrong with kicking it with your homies, unless your homies are caught up. If they are, they'll get you caught up too. We don't want you coming back facing some serious time. So what is your plan for succeeding out there? And what are you prepared to give up?

Marijuana

Marijuana is pretty bad for me I smoke a lot of weed I knew it' bad for me but somehow I still keep puffing on that beautiful plant. I soon as I wake up I blaze, then after breakfast I puff some more. My routine seems to be my reason for getting locked up so much. I hope you enjoy my story.

-Mike

From The Beat: How can we enjoy a story about a person who is so enslaved by this so-called "beautiful plant" that he's letting his life getting away from him? Man, if you can't quit puffing on your own, then you need to hook up with a program that will help you quit. Maybe you're running away from some kind of trouble in your life, or stress - but this isn't the way to do it, and in your heart, you know it. Peace.

A Good Kid

Q-Vole Beat! It's me Serio again. Well I'm going to talk about who I am. Well to start, this is my story...

The juvenile court system thinks that I am a juvenile that ain't good for nothin'. They think that I am a juvenile that ain't good for nothing. They think that I am bad that all I want to do is smoke bud and do wrong things to people or steal from people but on the real I ain't.

I am a good kid. I am a good working kid. I don't always do bad. I do good sometimes, but you got to understand that not all of the juveniles that have been or are in the system are not all bad. It's just the drugs or friends that they kick it with but anyways, I am going to cut this letter short because I don't got any more words. Alrato.

-Serio

From The Beat: Of course you're not a bad kid! We bet you're a good one, even better than you know it seems like you already know the problem: The drugs and the people you kick it with. They make you do bad things. So now that you know that, what are you going to do?

Never Change

Well a lot of people have their New Years Resolution saying some bullshhh that they are going to change and that its going to be the last time that they are going to be locked up, but I don't 'cause even though I try I'm never going to change. I'm not going to lie. I have tried but I never do.

-Sergio

From the Beat: We appreciate the fact that you are being honest, not just "saying the right thing." But wait - do you mean you can't change? Or you want to but can't? Because those are two very different situations. Think long term. What will happen if you don't change?

I hope whatever it is that I need I hope I get it soon

Chances

Damn Beats, I've been giving in life several chances. But yeah, I messed up and just came back. But my PO is starting to get fed up and trying to give me some real time. But damn, I don't know maybe it's what I need. But it ain't what I want for sure.

But I hope whatever it is that I need I hope I get it soon because I really want to stay out for more than a couple of months and try and get off probation.

-Pablo

From the Beats: What keeps bringing you back here? What's stopping you from getting off probation? Is it your friends? Drinking, drugs? Your family situation? What would you need to change in your life, if you wanted to turn it around.

NEW MEXICO

Funny Baby Story

I used to live in Penasco, I was in the 4th grade and attending Penasco Elementary School. Every week they would take us on a field trip to the ski valley. They named of the ski valley is "Sipapu". On my way to school my mom said have fun at Sipapu, and my little sister was all "I want to see papu." It was a good laugh

- Audriana

From The Beat: It's amazing what the little ones will do and say. The one good thing with little kids, they don't know any better and it makes it all the funnier.

Continued

I've been here for five months now, waiting for the day I get sentenced. I know I'm facing some years, but sitting waiting doing all this free time makes me feel like an animal in a cage. Sitting not knowing what' going to happen to you, because when I go to court it's like I go just to hear the word CONTINUED.

I'm not even in the court room a minute and the word continued comes out every time. What made me get through was just waiting for my court date to come, but now I don't even look forward to court any more. I don't even know what my options are or how many years I am facing. It's like I can't choose my fate or how I'm going to live my life.

-King Henry

From The Beat: Be patient King Henry your day in court will come. You mention in your last sentence that you can't choose your fate or live your own life? What ever you did to end up in the detention center was the choice you made to live your life and a choice that has sealed your fate, now it's up to the courts to decide what should be done with you.

I'll Tell You Who I Am!

Who I am? I'm a kind of guy that likes to have fun, kick it with girls and chill with the homies, but deep down inside I would like to have a friend that doesn't steal from you and one I could trust.

Who am I? is a kind of guy that would like to have a girl that would not cheat on me, and that would trust me and would love me. Who am I? is a kind of guy that would like to change his life and that would like to help his family do good, but I would not like it if my little brother came to the D-home.

-Ronnie

From The Beat: It sounds like being locked up has opened your eyes to the friends you "kick it" with. Pick your friends wisely, a true friend will all ways be there for you, through the good and the bad times, but most of all a true friends will help keep each other from ending up in jails or detention centers.

Caught In The Act!

Yeah, I was at my house not thinking about anything, thinking I'm cool chilling with another vato in my room with the door closed and no lights. Not thinking my boyfriend would come in, next thing you know there he is, man, I was embarrassed and busted red-handed, man I got my stuff all twisted up.

- Kristen

From The Beat: It's not good that you got caught cheating, but most of all it's not good that you even had a "vato" in your room with the door closed and the lights off. You should consider one word "abstinence", you then will never have to worry about getting caught cheating.

Today

Today I watched trees being cut down.
They were cut down so they wouldn't fall on our unit.
I wondered how long they'd been there.

Probably because they're old, and they were afraid
they'd fall.

They left a skinny one up. I wonder if it could hit my
room if it fell.

One of my favorite things is to listen to oldies.

My favorite song is "Wishing On A Star"

I don't even know who's singing it.

I like it for the words.

I have them memorized. Sometimes I sing them in my
room.

I feel it's time for us to get back together.

I have this song back home.

But I don't know who the singer is. I play it over and
over.

Here's another favorite song. I don't know the name.

I made a promise I could not keep.

I had a choice and I chose wrong.

Baby, please. I was blind. I couldn't see the light.

Hopefully I'm going to an oldies concert in San Jose, in
February.

-Singing Them Oldies

From The Beat: Thanks for taking us into a day in your life. We appreciate you giving us a glimpse of what you saw, your thoughts, and your hopes. We do hope you get to that oldies concert too.

What's Going To Be Different?

Today I got sentenced to 240 days in the hall, but got
credit for 73 days served. So in total I have 167 days left.
I thought I was going to get out on my birthday, but the
judge said no. So, what's going to be different is - I'm
going to stay out of trouble. Well, at least I'll try to. Plus,
I'll be moving to Winter Park, Florida soon. So, I guess I'll
start from scratch. Well Beat... peace.

-Joseph

From The Beat: Just remember the saying: wherever you go, there you are. New starts are great, but we always start with our past attached. And that's not a bad thing. We need to remember the past in order to not repeat the parts of it that landed us in trouble.

Sobering Up

Sitting on the balcony,
staring at the pool,
tripping on the reflection of the stars.
I'm in trouble.

My room reeks like green.

I can't even remember my own name.

I stay silent. I make a truce,
and a choice.

I won't get high again.

I'll stay true.

-Jose

From The Beat: OK, we've been waiting for you to get serious again with your writing. Good poem. Next.....

Clean Up

Trash shouldn't be thrown in the streets.

Be like the crow and make it fly.

When you look in the mirror

you'll feel proud of yourself.

Stay silent. Don't brag about it.

-Anonymous

From The Beat: Excellent advice from a very modest ecologist.

Bones, Etc.

Bones are especially delicious in the morning.
Passengers on the gravy train engage in a futile search
for a cell full of mashed potatoes.

Sadness engulfs the souls of these sorry searchers.

As a last resort they pluck a turkey's final feather.

The evildoers try to carve it with a spoon.

On the edge of avail they realize

there is a pre-cut turkey sale.

This story will make my children laugh.

-Anonymous

From The Beat: Strange poem Mr. Anonymous. (Hey, we know where there's a cell full of mashed potatoes.)

Questions, And Some Advice

Can you see me through the fog?

Do you know who I am?

What do you know about me?

I doubt you know much.

Only what you read in my file.

But you are the one with the authority.

I am viewed as a threat to myself.

But do you really care if I threaten myself?

My advice to you

before you make your next decision:

get to know me.

-Jackson

From The Beat: Delivered with your usual skill, Jackson. We've come to expect flashes of brilliance from you. We'd love to be surprised by something even more...perhaps a moment of scintillating personal insight - an epiphany, of sorts. Such a moment, of course, would be your ticket out of the system. In the meantime, and time, as you know, can be mean, we'll feast on your wit. Perhaps wit precedes wisdom.

Who I Am

I'm a young teen puttin' it down for my town. Just kickin'
it, so lookin' around to see who can be found throwin'
down. Hopefully I'm not the one gonna go down, but it's
what happens in my crazy town.

-Ernesto

From The Beat: You are telling us that you don't want to "go down". Which means you understand that it's no fun to be on the receiving end of violence. The next step is to realize that if everyone stops fighting, no one will have to "go down". You are more than a punching bag, and more than a puncher. You deserve a good life. Start acting as if you deserve a good life and see what happens.

Who Am I?

I'm the one who passed away. People thought I was dead.
Really - it was a long sleep I slept. The time has come. My
long sleep is over. I've come back twice as strong. They
made me like this. The government talks about equality.
It ain't nothing but poverty. They making with lies and all
of us are dropping like flies.

I can find myself wanting to change, but corruption is
stopping my heart

from fighting for reasons me, myself, can
understand.

This soldado is ready to fight and nobody wants to let
the mundo know who I am.

With respect,

-B-Boy

From The Beat: Well, now that you're back, B-Boy, we suggest you lay low for a while and figure out the very best way to achieve your goals. Fighting against poverty and inequality are noble intentions. But your brain and your persistence will be your strongest weapons. And you must build alliances. Forget about violence. That's a losing battle. Not a bad thing, to be a soldier for justice and equality, armed with good ideas and good intent. We salute you.

How Many Chances

I have had so many chances and I'm still not in CYA. I ran from every ranch camp, group home, and ROP, and caught new cases.

Almost everything you can imagine, I've done. And I'm still getting chances.

I'm getting sent to a placement in Wyoming. I'm going to finish this time and stay out of trouble, because the next time I get caught up I won't be so lucky and will most likely end up in prison, because I'll be 18 real soon. I'm done with this crap. I need to grow up and start living my life the right way – straight up.

Y'all who are saying it's cool to be locked up are trying to be something you aren't. You're suckers. Get out. There are better things out there. I'm gone from this stuff, for good.

Nice writing to you all for all these years. This is my last piece for The Beat. Late.

-Clowny

From The Beat: Yeah, we like you Clowny, but we're tired of seeing you in here. Get with it and when you've figured things out, send us a line or two and let us know what's cooking. We wish you the best in Wyoming. We hear the sky is pretty tall out there on the plains.

So Rough So Tough

I've been in here so many times I'm used to it.

I got caught up on my home pass.

I've been in here 18 days and today I got sentenced.

The DA tried to send me to ranch, but probation hooked me up and I'm going back to the group home.

I should be leaving in a week.

And I know now to stay home and kick it with my family.

-Andrew

From The Beat: We hope you follow through on what you've learned.

Who Am I?

I am a fifteen year old kid who lives in Watsonville with my mom, three sisters, brother,

and a nephew. I go to Luna Park School in Watsonville, but now it looks like I'll be going to ROP for from nine to twelve months. My favorite food is pizza. My favorite music is rap, hip-hop, and oldies. Harry Potter is my favorite movie. I Spy is my favorite book. Football is my favorite sport.

-Josue

From The Beat: Thanks for the bio Josue. This is the start of "who you are". But we wonder what makes you tick? Who are your heroes? What would you like to study in college? Are you following the presidential campaign? Do you play an instrument? What makes you happy? What makes you cry? What's the nicest thing you've done for someone else? What's the nicest thing someone's done for you? etc.

Happy New Year

Q-Vo Beat! I'm still in this place, but let me say Happy New Year. I'm just kicking back, like always – just reading, writing, playing ping-pong, foosball, and chillin' with the homeboys in here.

Well, I am waiting upon my release so I can go home and kick it with my family and enjoy a nice day with them. I can't stop thinking about that day. When I get out I'm going to BBQ and let the homies know I'm out.

-Jose

From The Beat: Get settled in with your family before looking up the homies. And when you do reconnect with old friends, be careful not to fall back into old habits. Make sure you choose your companions wisely.

Who Am I?

I am a person who gets in trouble, but I know on the inside that I'm a good person, and I know I can stay out of trouble. But it's hard for me, because I'm around a lot of people who get in trouble. And I kind of like the excitement. Sometimes, when it's stupid and it's not worth getting in trouble for, I'll back out. But I don't know why I can't do that every time.

-Dennis

From The Beat: Two questions come to mind for us. 1: Are you saying that there are things worth getting in trouble for, even though you know you'll have to pay for it with your freedom? 2: Why don't you hang out with people who prefer not getting into trouble? And finally, an observation. We think you're right – about being a good person on the inside. Your job is to let the inside person out, and to ask yourself what the consequences are for any questionable action you might be about to take. Is a minute or two of wildness worth a month or two of freedom?

Who I Am

My earliest memory is of kindergarten. I learned to play handball in kindergarten. A female taught me, and that's how I knew I liked females. And I liked them a lot. I got my first kiss in kindergarten, and my first girlfriend.

First grade was pretty cool. I made out with a girl in first grade. I had a lot of girlfriends and I learned how to be polite to people. I don't like a lot of people but I learned how to be polite to them.

In second grade I hung out with kindergartners and I was sort of like a teacher. I taught them to build things, like houses, out of blocks. I played with them.

I don't remember anything from third or fourth grade, because by 8 I was already smoking weed. I'd found some at my friend's house and he showed me how to do it. He was ten.

In fifth grade I discovered sports – especially basketball, football, track, and soccer. And I kept meeting more girls.

I got my first beating in 5th grade. A group of kids tried to beat me up. In 6th grade I learned how to do math, and my uncle taught me a lot of things about construction.

In 7th grade I was part of a championship baseball team. We were called the Reds. It was part of a league.

In 8th grade I was in the Pony League and hit my first home run. And I became a pitcher.

In 9th grade I was kicked out of school for 3 months for fighting. From then on, I was home schooled, until high school. To be continued.....

-Albert

From The Beat: This is a quick tour through your life, and mostly from the vantage point of your school experiences. Maybe in succeeding chapters we'll get to know more about your life outside of school. We look forward to it.

Twice

Inside a confused head
held up by words unsaid

I explore my brain
delving into a realm

from which I can extract the pain.

But that trip comes with a price.

I'm misguided by my own corrupted advice.

If I were my own therapist

I'd have to take my time, drop a rhyme,
and fire myself twice.

-Jackson

From The Beat: First rate work Jackson. Smart and funny. When you fire your therapist, let us know.

Los Que Más Quiero

Bueno todos tenemos a alguien a quien queremos con todo el corazón y no deseamos nunca perder a esa persona.

Lo que yo no quiero perder nunca es a mis padres porque siempre he estado con ellos. Desde pequeño, ellos me han dado mucho cariño y comprensión. Por eso les pido a Dios que los cuide y les de salud. Le agradezco porque los tiene con vida.

Ahora que estoy lejos de ellos, me siento triste porque estoy en otro país. Yo los recuerdo todos los días del mundo.

Cuando salga de esta prisión, voy a ir a mi país, Honduras, para reunirme con ellos y pasar Buenos momentos a lado de mis padres.

From The Beat: Esperamos que esta experiencia te ayude a pensar bien las cosas que realmente valen la pena. Como tu dices, ellos son muy importante para ti y tú debes de ser muy importante para ellos. Aunque ellos saben que estas en un lugar seguro, una cárcel es una cárcel y ellos sufren al saber que estes en la situación que estas. Si llegas a salir de este lugar recuerda que en otros países las cárceles no tienen nada de comparación que este lugar. Enfocate en cosas positivas para una mejor vida.

What I Love The Most

Well, we all have someone we love with all our hearts and wish to never loose that person.

What I don't want to ever loose in my life is my parents because I've always been with them. Since very young, they have given me a lot of caress and comprehension. That's why I always ask God to take care of them and provide them good health. I also thank Him for having them alive.

Now that I am very far from them, I feel sad because I am in a different country. I remember them every day of the world.

When I get out from this prison, I'm going to go to my country, Honduras to reunite me with them and spend good moments by their side.

-Josue, San Francisco

From The Beat: We hope this experience help you think things right that are worth it. Like you say, they are very important to you and you should also be important to them. Even though they know you're in a safe place, a jail to them is still a jail, and they are suffering to know your locked away position. If you get a chance to get out of here, remember that the jail system in other poor country are very bad, and they have to comparison to the ones we have here.



Las Cosas Faciles No Sirven

La vida no es tan simple porque tienes que pasar por obstaculos. Como nosotros no queremos hacer las cosas más costosas, siempre vamos por lo facil. Nos ponemos a vender drogas y robar en vez de trabajar. El dinero de la droga o robandolo, no te dura como el dinero ganado. El dinero bien ganado te dura más.

Siempre hay que pensar antes de hacer algo. La calle o la droga no te deja nada mas que miserias.

Yo les digo esto por experiencia. Desde niño he andado en la calle de El Salvador. Ahorita que estoy preso y un poco más maduro, me doy cuenta de todo los errores que cometi. Nunca es tarde para comenzar.

From The Beat: Estas en lo cierto. Siempre lo mal venido mal se va. No hay nada tan grande como sentirse orgulloso de obtener las cosas con el mismo sudor de la frente. Esperamos que ahora que te distes cuenta de los errores que has cometido puedas hacer las cosas pensando con la cabeza no con los piez. Todos aprendemos de nuestros errores, esperamos que ya sea la hora que tú aprendas.

Easy Earnings Don't work

Life isn't easy, because you have to go through a lot obstacles. Some of us don't like to earn things the hard way, so we go for the easy ones. We start selling drugs and steal things instead of looking for a job. The money from drugs or stealing, don't last too long. The money well earned last longer.

You have to think before acting up. The street or drugs don't take you anywhere but bring you misery.

I say this from experience. Ever since I was a young kid, I've been living on the streets of El Salvador. Now that I am locked up and more mature, I realize all the mistakes I'm making. It's never too late to start over.

-Salvador, San Francisco

From The Beat: You're right! Always what comes in a bad shape, the same way it comes it goes. There isn't such as thing than gaining everything with the sweat of your head. We hope that after realizing your mistakes, you take better choices using your head not your feet. We all learn from our mistakes, we hope you do too.

2008

Para mí lo que va a ser diferente en este año es que voy a estar más tiempo con mi familia porque estos dos años atras no he estado con ellos. Yo en dos días voy a regresar a mi país. Me van a mandar para Honduras porque pedi deportación. Yo he estado tiempo aqui y quiero ver a mi mama este año. Quiero que todo cambie.

Yo aqui he estado vendiendo drogas y por eso es que estoy aqui. Ya he regresado aqui y varias veces. Yo no quiero regresar aqui. Ahora que voy a mi país, voy a estar más tiempo con mi familia. Voy a regresar aqui pero esta vez voy a trabajar legal. Ahora si voy a aprovechar el tiempo para estar con mi madre.

From The Beat: Si tú sientes que al estar aqui no te ayudará en nada entonces deberías de buscar en irte al lugar donde no sigas haciendo cosas malas que al mismo tiempo dañen a las demás personas. Esperamos que al estar otra vez a tu país, te vuelvas una persona mejor.

2008

For me, what's going to be different this year is that I'm going to hang more with my family because these last years I've haven't done it. I'm going to turn back to my country. They are going to send me to Honduras because I ask to deport me. I've been here for a while, and I want to go back to see my mother this year. I want all to change.

Here I've spent my time selling drugs and that's why I'm here. I've been back here many times. I don't want to come back here. Now that I'm going to my country, I'll spend more time with my family. I'll be back to this country though, but this time I'm working legally if I make it. Now I'm going to take advantage of this time to be with my mother.

-Jose, San Francisco

From The Beat: If you feel being here won't take you anywhere, you should leave to avoid making more mistakes that harm the lives of other. We hope you turn back to be a better person when you go back to your country.

Que Le Tienes Miedo A Pender

Sin duda alguna, a las personas que yo jamás deseara perder a mi familia especialmente a mi mama. Mi mama es lo más grande que me ha regalado Dios.

Yo quiero mucho a mi mama porque ella me ha criado y ha sufrido mucho para criarme. Ella ha pasado por duros momentos, pero siempre nos ha sacado adelante a todo mi familia. Por eso ella es la persona que yo más quiero despues de Dios. Mi mamá siempre me dijo que nunca hiciera algo que me llebara a la cárcel, pero yo nunca le hice caso.

Ahora estoy aquí encerrado, ahora el remordimiento me mata. Si le viera hecho caso estuviera a fuera no aquí encerrado. Sé que algún día voy a salir, voy arreglar mi vida y voy a ser feliz a mi mama con estar junto a ella. Eso es lo que ella mas ahnela estar junta con se familia.

From The Beat: Esa es exactamente la positividad que necesitas para salir adelante. Algún día vas a salir de ese lugar y vas a tener el tiempo para arreglar tus problemas y sobresalir en tu vida. Tienes a una gran persona quien ha dado todo por ti y tu familia. Es hora que tú también empieces a dar algo de lo que te han dado. Tu madre se merece mucho de ti y sería muy injusto que le pagues de esta manera.

What You Afraid To Loose

Without a doubt, the people who I never would like to loose is my family especially my mother. My mother is the best gift God has given me.

I love my mother so much because she has raised me and has suffer a lot just to raise me. She has gone through a lot of hard moments, but she still has helped my family succeed. That's why she's the person who I love most after God. My mother told me to never do things that will get me into jail, but I never listen.

Now I am locked up, and the remorse is what's killing me. If I had listen, I wouldn't be here locked up. I know I'll get out some day, fix my life and make my mother happy being with her. That's what she desires the most, to be with her whole family united.

Edwar, San Francisco

From The Beat: That's exactly the type of positivity you need to succeed. One day, you will get out from this place and you'll have the time to resolve your problems and succeed in life. You have a great person who has given her life for you and her family. It's time for you to start giving back what has been given to you. Your mother deserves a lot from you, and it would unjust if you repay her this way.

Quien Soy

Primero que nada soy hijo de Dios que está pagando un error que cometió. Hice algo que el Señor no nos ha enseñado a hacer. De toda manera lo hemos hecho porque nos hemos alejado de él y de su palabra.

Un buen ejemplo sería decirles a las personas que no vayan a caer en los que nosotros hemos caído, que busquen la palabra del señor. Soy un joven que por haber cometido un error, lo voy a pagar regresando a mi país.

Catrachos no se aguiten.

From The Beat: Todos cometemos errores en la vida y atravez de tus palabras podemos darnos cuenta que has aprendido de esos errores. Agradecemos mucho tus palabras y esperamos que muchos escuchen tu consejo. A veces no se necesita de una escritura del tamaño de un libro para cactar un consejo. Con las pocas palabras sabemos que quisistes decirnos. Dios te bendiga a ti y aquellos quienes creen en El.

Who Am I

First of all, I am a son of God who is paying off an error he committed. I did something God didn't teach us to do. We did it anyways because we've gotten far away from Him and His Words.

A good advice would be to tell the people not to end up in the same direction we gone and to look for the Words of God. I am a young man who committed an error, as a result, I'm going to repay it by going back to my country.

Hondurans, don't get sad!

-Dimas, San Francisco

From The Beat: We all make mistakes in life, and through your words, we can see that you've learned from it. We thank you for your words and hope a lot of you guys take your advice. Sometimes you don't need a message of the size of a book to get a good advice. With very little words, we understood your message. Thank you once again. God bless you and all those who believe in Him.

Si Llegara A Perder Algunos De Ellos

Yo tengo miedo de perder a mi madre que es lo más importante que tengo en mi vida. Si ella me faltara. Sería lo más terrible que me pudiera pasar a mí y a mis hermano que tengo. Tengo dos hermanos y hermanas. También si me faltara alguna de mis heramos, sería algo temeroso porque son personas por las que quiero mucho.

From The Beat: Te entedemos! Todos tememos perder algún miembro de nuestras familia especialmente parte de la familia más cercana. Ellos te necesita afuera también. ¿Si sigues portandote de esta manera, no crees que también puedas perderlos de otra manera?

If I Loose Any Of Them

I am afraid to loose any of my parents who are the most important people in my life. It would be the most terrible thing that can happen to my brothers and I. I have two brothers and two sisters. It would be terrible to be if any of my siblings leave this world as well because they are people I love so much.

-Douglas, San Francisco

From The Beat: We understand! We all fear to lose any of our family member especially those who are really close to us. They need us out there. If you continue acting like this, don't you think that you might lose them in a different way? Careful!

La Vida Me Ha Dado Muchas Oportunidades

Was up Beat? Tú sabes quien es este vato es Vampiro de San Jose. Pues la vida me ha dado muchas oportunidades y he sido bien pendejo porque no las he aprobechado. El año pasado yo estaba trabajando y estaba ganando bien hasta be iba a juntar con mi hyna. Tenía pensado ahorrar dinero. Todo iba bien pero por andar con los homies y en el desmadres todo se vino para abajo. Me agarro la jura y caí en la carcel. Perdi todo, mi trabajo y mi familia.

Cuando salí me encontré solo en las calles, pero los homies y mi hyna nunca me dejaron solo. Lo que me duele es que mi familia me dio la espalda cuando mas los necesitaba. Unos meses después volvi a caer a la cárcel y ahora quiero una oportunidad más para empezar de nuevo.

From The Beat: Esa oportunidad la tendras siempre y cuando luches por tenerla. Nada es imposible en esta vida. Hay otras cosas más importante que tus amigos y el desmadre. Si tus amigos y tu jaina fueron los únicos que no te dieron la espalda, ha de haber sido porque fue a ellos a quienes buscastes en vez de ganarte el cariño de tu familia. Recuerda que la familia no olvida a sus seres querido de la noche a la mañana.

Life Has Given Me A Lot Of Opportunities

What's up? You know who this is, Vampiro from San Jose. Life has given me a lot of opportunities and I've been a fool because I haven't taken advantage of any of them. Last year, I was working, gaining a lot of money and very close to move out with my lady. I was thinking to save money. Everything was good until everything went bad when I started hanging with my friend and when being in the mess.

When I got out, I found myself alone on the streets, but my homies and girl never left me alone. What hurts me the most is that my family turned their back on my when I needed them the most. A months later, I got locked up again and now I want an opportunity to start over.

-Vampiro Santa Clara

From The Beat: That chance of gaining back the trust of your family can be obtained at any time you want as long as you desire it so much. There are more important things than your homies and being in the mess. If you believe that your friends and girl were the only one who didn't turned their back on you, it must have been because they were the only one you look first instead of the love of your family. Remember that a family member can not forget another member from one day to another.

Change Vs. Success

If I keep going this way in life, I will most likely be in county. I have realized that I have to make changes in my life. My life would be healthy, but not where I want it to be. I realized this after how I saw this act that got me in here affected my mom. I've never heard my mom say she loved me the way she did when I was arrested.

I realize that to be successful, I need to change. I think I need to exercise my choices, move, and maybe start ranging out with different people so I can turn my life around. This place is the worst place I've ever been, and I learned that I never have to be here if I change my life when I get out. When I get out, I'ma get my probation/house arrest over and get a job and my license and be more successful.

I need to study and do well in school so I can leave my past behind and stay out of trouble. To me, being in jail has changed the way I am going to do my life. When I think about doing something illegal, I have to remind myself that I can end up right back where I am. Me, my parents, my family and friends do not want me to be back here. This experience has truly changed my perspective on my life and what I need to do is be free.

-Nitrus

From The Beat: What struck us most about this fine piece — besides your strong commitment to change your perspective and future — is the way you describe your mom telling you she loves you when you were arrested. The worst thing we can imagine is for you (or anyone) to do something with such serious consequences that you may have to hear your mom say those words as if saying them for the last time. But you don't have to get to that point, and we can see that you won't get to that point because you are now taking control of your life. You're right, this will make your parents, your family and your friends proud of you. More than all of them, however, you will have reason to be proud of yourself. Growing up is not easy, but it seems to us that you have climbed a steep hill, and are now able to look all around and see which path leads where. So, put your feet down on the path that leads where you want to go, and then just keep walking, one step at a time.

My Mom's Memory

Every day I spend time in my cell, all I can think about is my beautiful mom. My mom was a great woman. She passed away when I was barely into my teens. Before she passed away, she would always tell me, "We came to this country so we can have a better life."

When I first got in here, all I thought about was how my mom is probably hurtin'. I would lay down and pray to God, "Please tell my mom I'm sorry and I love her." When I think of the last things she said to me, "Do good in school so you can get a good job," I get mad at myself, because when she passed away, I felt like there was no reason to do good in school because she's not in my life. I felt like without my mom, I ain't shhh. She was the only one in my life, because my dad had moved on.

I'm with my dad now, and I'm still getting adjusted to having a father. I wouldn't do good in school, because I didn't think my dad cared.

Now I think sometimes people need to hit rock bottom so they can realize what they are doing wrong. So I just want to say, I love you, Mom. You'll always be on my mind. I'm sorry for all the wrong things I did. Your memory will always be with me.

-Cuba

From The Beat: We think you let your mom down when you decided after she died not to do what she always encouraged you to do. And, in letting her down, you obviously let yourself down also. But at the same time, making a mistake is just that, only a mistake. It can be remedied, and it appears to us that you are well on the road to bringing about that remedy. You can still make your mom (and dad) proud of you by putting your very good brain to use. Your mom wanted you to get a good education so that she would leave you better off than her parents left her. Now is the time to put some substance behind her words, to care for her by caring for yourself. Let her life be more than just a memory. Let it be a living reality in your life. Good luck.

I Carry Your Heart With Me

I carry your heart with me
I carry it in my heart
I am never without it
Anywhere I go, you go, baby, my dear
And whatever is done by only me
Is your doing, my darling, I fear

No fate, you are my fate
My sweet, my baby, my best friend
You're my everything
I need nothing in da world
Because you are my world
It's you.
You are whatever a moon has always meant
And whatever a sun will always sing is your beauty

Here is the deepest secret nobody knows
Here is the root of the root
And the bud of the bud
And the sky of the sky
Of a tree called love
Which grows higher than my body can hold
And this love I know, it's true, baby

I carry your heart
I carry it in my heart

-Lil' Sneaky

From The Beat: We seldom give Piece Of the Week to love poems, but there is so much in this one that you deserve the designation. However, we still have one question to ask about a love as powerful as this: Why would you give it up for something that, at least at the moment you did it, was more important to you than she was? Anyone who can write of his passion as passionately as you have here can also figure out a way not to lose it!

What These White Walls Do To You

They said I was cold before I got in
They claim I need time in a cell to straighten out
But do they know what those four white walls do to you?

I learned my lesson after a week
But the judge feels like 90 more days will do me some good

After that first week, hope is gone
Love fades away and emotions disappear
The judge don't know me
He don't care about what I'm going through
He don't see the damage he is putting on me
But more important, my family

If cold is what they called me when I got in
Then you could call me, "Ice," when I get out
This ain't correction, thug, it's corruption
Trust, I rather have six feet of dirt on top of me
Than be in here

-Mohammad

From The Beat: We think you've put your finger on one of the worst aspects of what passes for justice in this country, and that is the belief that if a month of jail has benefits for you and society, then two months, six months, ten years would be even better! As you have figured out, there comes a point of diminishing returns when the benefits of incarceration are far outweighed by the detriments, and the lessons learned are undone by bitterness and anger. We think this shows a kind of bankruptcy of thinking among those in control of the system, from politicians to judges to POs. But your thinking is anything but bankrupt, so we want to encourage you in the strongest terms to resist that preference for the grave in exchange for determination to get out of here and teach what you know to those who think they know so much, but don't. In short, you've got the experience those in charge seem to lack, and you've got the brains to use that experience to change things for the better. We hope you do.

Family

My family is like the Iraq war, one side dislikes the other
 I feel like my family is playing tug-a-war on me
 My dad's side moved to Nevada recently
 My teenage brother went, too
 Now all I got is my three sisters and mother
 But my mom works three jobs and is never home
 Ain't got enough rooms in da house, so I gotta sleep in the
 living room
 Sometimes there isn't food
 But my mom tries the best she can
 My dad was murdered by some fools
 8/26/05 is his death date, may he rest in peace
 My dad was a homeless alcoholic livin' in the streets
 Thirty-eight years old when he died
 Never got to say good-ye
 My grandma is a coke fiend on my dad's side
 I remember three years old watchin' her do lines
 My mom gave me up when I was one
 Lived with my alcoholic and drug addict cousin 'til I was
 ten
 Never saw my real mom until then
 Watchin' my cousin and I get abused every day
 My family is twisted in so many ways
 Stepdad in prison for rape
 He gonna get deported to Peru in 2010
 My family is spread out

Like a million pieces of crumpled bread
 Every one dislikes everyone
 Lost my stepsister
 She got shot in the head
 I held her all night until someone saw me holding her as
 she was dead
 She was only seven years old
 After that, I walked around with a knife
 Started doing drugs right after my sister's death
 That was my older sister
 She was gone in a blink of an eye
 She's the reason why I got into the gang life
 Always in and outta here, doin' time
 Every one in my mom's family wishes I would die
 But, hey, I'm still alive
 I guess this is my crazy life

- Guera

From The Beat: You write very powerfully and convincingly about the terrible things you've had to endure growing up, and that led you into the life of a gang member. But explaining how you got into this situation is not the same thing as accepting your situation. That is a choice you are now making as a young adult, rather than as a lifestyle that was handed to you as a child and had no ability to change. Now, you have that ability, so when you end by saying "I guess this is my crazy life," basically you're saying that you just have to go with the flow, accept what you know, and ignore what you need to grow. Why would you so casually accept a lifestyle that has created so much pain and death in your life, and left you a prisoner, a slave of a system that can't possibly care for you as much as you care for yourself? Forget what your parents showed you! Forget what your homies taught you! Forget the street code that misguided you! You are now the captain of your ship, the master of your fate. You were a child when you were shown those things. Now that you're a young adult, take control of your life.

Lies Brought Me Up To Jail

Laying down in my room...thinking... "The lights just turned off, but I can't go back to sleep, 'cause I just had a bad-ass dream." I look outside my window, thinking and wishing to have my freedom.

I look up in the sky, looking for my star, but the only thing I found is the sky without moon and stars. It looks dark outside, just like it is inside, but I guess it's all right. I ain't really scared of the darkness, 'cause my heart is already really dark. It wasn't like this when I was in the outs, but since I got locked up, my whole life went down.

I been here just for a short minute, but to me, it's been a long time. I want to get out, 'cause I have a life in the outs. I look around me and the only thing I see is myself inside this cell. I feel this loneliness that I never thought I was goin' to have.

I miss my family and I miss him, too. It's hard to believe that I ended up in jail. If I would've listened to my "mom, if I wouldn't never left her house, I wouldn't be here. But I never listen to her. All I wanted was to be with him. Right now I have enough time to think about what I want, but there's not a lot to think, 'cause I know what I want.

I thank God for changing my life. I used to be a "chola," living "mi vida loca," doing drugs in the streets at the age of a new teen. I started banging, 'cause I've always been crazy, but I regret all the bad things I did in the past. Even though it takes me a long time, I couldn't realize that I was messing up. I broke my mom's heart every time I lied. I asked her to forgive me for all the things I have done.

I left with all the drama behind, and move on with my life. Now I am in a cell because of my lies.

-Morales

From The Beat: When we read a piece like this, we see again how much the mind can trap you into a set of actions that hurt those you love and hurt you. But the other side of that coin is that when someone as young as you sees clearly who her choices have hurt and where her life is going and makes the hard decisions to change, then the shackles of the mind have been broken, and the future looks so much brighter than the past! Don't let your mother down. Don't let yourself down, either!

Vicious Is My Life

Once I was free, free from these walls
 I didn't know nothing, I thought life was so small
 But like I've come to find out, life is bigger than it seems
 We doing things vicious, livin' life like a dream
 But even while I was, my mind was confined
 Incarcerated in lost dreams, from the lies fed to me as a kid
 Never told what to do, so I did what I did
 Grew up tough on the streets, shown never to have fear
 Steady accelerating in my life, moving fast with no one to steer
 Not knowing where I was going, was just along for the ride
 But now I'm too deep in, so I can't run and hide
 I used to be out there, doing it for the fun
 Now I'm older in my mind, thinking about what it's become
 Out there, high on drugs, truth free from my mind
 Locked sober in my cell, thinking about and through time
 Things used to all make sense, when no thoughts ran through my mind
 Now I'm tossing and turning at night, can't sleep right in my bed
 Finding piece after piece, like it's a puzzle in my brain
 Sitting back here, I'm watchin' things, just observing the game
 I don't know what to think; I don't know what to say
 I cannot intervene, so in my mind this must stay
 I've been given a conscience on the things I now do
 I gotta different perspective on my life and my crew
 But these things, I now think, are just a factor of my imagination
 I'm tryna block them out, so I need some separation
 Separation from this truth, that follows me where I go
 I'm tryna duck and dodge it, but it hits me like snow
 It's so hard; it's so cold; my mind is brain frozen
 'Cause I'm steady dealing with this life, this life I have chosen

- Speedy Vicious

From The Beat: There is so much wisdom, so much experience, so much observation — and so much fearful confusion in this amazing poem. One thing is for sure, though. Your mind is not brain frozen. Your brain is alive with thoughts. You are analyzing what you were taught and how you lived it against the actual experience that lifestyle has brought you, and you are changing. Change is always a little scary, because it requires us to give up what is known and comfortable for something unknown. Let your thinking take you beyond where you are now. That sense that you are "in too deep" to change is another of those false lessons you've been taught which, if you don't examine carefully, will only put you deeper into the dark pit of incarceration or worse. Your brain is better than those who schooled you. You've already begun to use it to school yourself. Don't stop now!

Friday Night

Posted at the party with the homeboys on the creep
 I look over my shoulder and what do I see?
 My jaina's body calling for me
 So I check myself and approach with ease
 Leaning to the left as I walk with my cholo lean
 I come from behind and whisper in her ear
 "Baby Girl, don't look so down, tu cholo is here"
 I put my arms around her and kiss her in the neck
 So the homeboys could see she mine and get to step
 As she turn around, we catch each other's eyes
 For a few seconds that feel like an eternity I can't move
 I'm stuck, I'm hypnotized
 We break the trance with a small, wet kiss
 And I reassure her, "Tonight's just you and me"
 We walk towards the door to make our escape
 As the door shuts behind us, I hold her close to me
 Tonight's the night, and it's time for me to fulfill my duty

-Spooky

From The Beat: So, fulfilling your "duty" apparently does not include staying with your girl, but only doing the deed! Time to grow up, Spooky, and realize that being a man is so much more than sex, which any dog or chicken can do. Being a man means being a responsible adult, and being responsible starts with yourself. You can't truly respect your girl if you don't truly respect yourself. And, as long as you do the things that let the system take you from those that love you and put you under their control, you are not showing yourself respect. Your poem is beautiful, but we wish you'd take your thinking to the next level so that you can preserve what's important and jettison the rest.

Myself

I feel angry at myself for hurting myself. I'm happy when I'm wit' the people I care about. But the choices I've made were wrong. I've been back and forth in the hall. Even though I say, "I ain't comin' back," I still do. It's been two weeks that have gone and still three weeks to go. All I can think about is, "When is this going to end? Will I ever make myself and my mother proud? Will the pain I cause haunt me for the rest of my life?"

All I know is that I want to cause happiness to the people I love and care about. Through all that has happened, will I change my ways? Will I show everyone I can be a smart young girl?

-Lil' Gatita

From The Beat: We can't answer this very deep question for you, as you already know. But what we hope is that, putting aside all those people you want to please, you will show yourself that you can be a "smart young girl."

Wish I Could Fly From Here

I wish I was a bird so I could fly away
 Fly far away from this place
 I'm a prisoner of my own in jail
 With no bail
 Thinkin' about the time I was free
 And could laugh and could sing
 Now I gotta stay sober
 And maintain order
 To please the system
 All of my friends, damn, how bad I miss them
 Now I'm in here ranting and raving about my life and troubles
 But they just seem to double
 Out of no place
 I wish I was in space
 The stars in my eyes, let 'em twinkle
 Let 'em shine
 I wish I had the time
 To pay for what I've done
 But that wouldn't be no fun
 Sitting in my cell
 Feelin' like I'm in hell
 Only realized what I got
 After it was gone
 Now here I am
 A pawn in a game
 Put to shame
 No more fame
 An', anyway
 So let this be a lesson to you
 If you do the crime
 You gotta do the time

-Looney

From The Beat: "Do the crime, do the time" is nothing more than a slogan without much thought behind it. Does it mean that, if you didn't have to do time, you wouldn't mind doing crime? In other words, is it the punishment that makes the crime "wrong" or is it "wrong" by some other measure that is there long before punishment is ever part of the equation. We think have to free yourself from a kind of thinking before you can truly be free.

Lost Time

Livin' my life, which is full of sin
 Thinking back now, asking where my life has been
 Struggle and pain, newborns and death
 Asking God to forgive my mistakes and regrets
 The nights and days come and go
 The sun shines bright as the half moon glows
 Looking for an answer, looking at the stars
 Looking outside, with my life behind bars
 Every day I grow old, with any situation
 Not thinking about the time I'll be facing
 I always think that everything will be fine
 But one thing I'm losing is all of my time

- Rick

From The Beat: Time passes at the same rate for all of us. We only "lose" it when we don't put it to use. Even behind bars, there are ways to make your time productive so it is not "lost." Are you moving ahead in school? Are you reading? Are you building broken relationships and examining your own future path so that you'll have a place to put your feet when you touch down? Any preparation you are doing now for a future as a productive and free man is time well spent, not time lost.

God Won't Answer

Every time I try to change
 There somethin' always holdin' me back
 And then they wonder why I gotta stay wit' my strap
 The judge asked me what was I thinkin' that day
 I told him, "I'm sorry, but that my mentality"
 Aye, how can I change when I learn from people that raised me?
 Now I'm locked behind these walls that are driving me crazy
 Screaming, "Screw this world," askin' God, can he save me
 But no one answers; it feels like nobody cares
 My temper flares every time I see that they stare
 24-hour lockdown; I've been through that, done that
 All because these funny people think they sick, but they jus' dumb ratsow can
 I change when I learn from people that raised me
 Ow 'm locked behind these wa-ls, askin' God, can he
 Twelve days later I come out of my cell,
 If I didn't, no matter, I jus' came out of hell
 How can I change with all this nonsense that happens?
 While all these demands inside got me snappin' an' smashin'
 On these punk funny people that be thinkin' they lasting
 In this game to pay, you gotta strive to survive
 No punkin' out if you wanna keep yo' name alive
 Or go all bad like these ex-homies I know
 I'm telling you, mang, these were my people, we're bros
 This can't stop, won't stop! You gotta earn your stripes
 You could find me in my city on one of my get rich hypes
 On the outs is different than on the ins
 I'm locked up, doing eighteen months, waiting for this nightmare to end

-Eight Ball and Dopey

From The Beat: If you don't change that truly silly belief that "this can't stop, won't stop," then this nightmare will only keep repeating itself, except in ever darker tones. You say you pray to God to save you, but that no one answers. What do you think God's answer will sound like? A voice from Heaven? A note put under your door? A burning bush? We think God is answering you right this minute, but that you don't like the answer you're getting. If you can't see that the consequences of your own actions are what put you in this hell — and that this hell is one of God's answers — then we fear you're doomed to repeat your actions and repeat the consequences. Time to put a little of your time to examining yourself and your own actions, and how they lead to the "nightmare" you claim you want to end.

Memories

I can't go to sleep
 I guess it's 'cause you're on my mind
 What used to be love
 Is now a faded memory in time
 Thinking of you and me
 We were gonna bet married
 "Mucho besos"
 I hear your voice
 When I close my eyes
 I see your face
 My vato is gone
 Why did I turn myself in?
 But I guess destiny
 Doesn't want us to be
 I still love you
 And always will
 Until the end of time

-La Guera

From The Beat: Destiny has a very long sweep. You cannot know, from where you sit at this moment, what awaits you around the corner. Turning yourself in is a sign of maturity, and maturity is a necessary ingredient for successful relationships. So, although we feel your pain, we know you can ride it through to a better tomorrow.

Self Tragedy

As a result of my own at fault, I have resulted in a lot of pain through my corazón (hear) and soul. I don't know how to express myself well enough for someone to understand the meaning of the life I once knew as my crazy ways that put me through so many lágrimas (tears) . Why do I do the things I do knowing the repercussions that will come at hand. Before me is the future I will experience and the past I will never forget, for it has made me the person I am today which I greatly take pride in. I am what I have experienced. Inside me lives a person who can't take the pressure of being put away. It has made me a person that I have never known of and have no control over. My selfish ways has reached a point in which I will not be able to overcome!!

Mental games are played only to be erased through self-discipline. The situation I got myself facing is only temporary, for it will be repaired through concentration, taught by the inner deep feeling of ones inner thoughts. Behind me is the years and tears that will never be forgotten, though it has not made me change my demon ways. Memories were once the only thoughts I had of remembrance, now they are heartache memories for they will never be forgotten and never be experienced again.

We agree with a whole lot of things this next writer wrote to us, but we can't seem to agree with his closing sentence. "My deepest thoughts are put into pencil and paper for I will only be the one to really understand the true meaning of these tearful words that were shared and expressed." We don't quite agree with that because we have a feeling that there are many people who will truly understand the meaning of the words he expressed. He's writing from the Glen Mills School in Concordville, Pennsylvania. We could be wrong, but we think many people will be able to relate to what he's bringing to our attention. Thank you for your kind words...

The sun that once shined inside of me has been extinguished by our keepers, who do not permit us to enter into the equation of nature or our Raza. Rather, we are force-fed a steady diet of mental anguish, solitude and self-isolation, forbidden to be who we are, the ever-proud descendants of our beloved barrios! We are society's faceless and discarded human waste, who could not be trusted with our own dismal fates. Forgotten sons who dare not dream of a world beyond our perimeters governed by our captors, who yearn to find some hidden passage out of his fortress of perpetual time, to take us back to our blood-shed barrios and the lives we left behind so long ago...

My deepest thoughts are put into pencil and paper for I will only be the one to really understand the true meaning of these tearful words that were shared and expressed.

BRONSKI

If you're looking for incredible word play and a subject matter that's really relevant, then please look no further. This next writer who we haven't heard from in close to two years is back on the scene with one hell of a poem. He was once in our workshops but now is writing from Folsom State Prison in Represa, CA, where he has to serve six years. He's already served three years, so now he says time is flying, which we think is a blessing. We hope, for his sake, that time continues to fly so he can be home with us as soon as possible. Keep yo' head up and we'll always be here if you need someone to listen.

The Hands Of Time

I'm stuck forced to play the hand that God has given me.

The star I was before is now a faded memory.

No loved ones around me just friends that pretend to be.
I'm livin' in a nightmare that I wouldn't even wish upon my worst enemy. That's clear to see.

My pain runs deep and it burns like a shot of Hennessy.

I've been stabbed in the back by a comrade
So close he was like kin to me.

This poison gets me so sick please God!
Where's the remedy? Is this the end of me?
Or is it the beginning of my legacy?

Yeah I'll play the hand I'm dealt, but I hate to follow the rules of man. They'll try and make you fall for anything so I walk alone and here I stand. They say everything happens for a reason and, God alone knows the plan.

So I follow his words like blueprints
And when your ready to take me home, Lord here I am.

So I say a prayer to keep my mind straight.

Not just for me, but for my mom's sake.

I'll be her precious baby boy until her dyin' day.
It's hard to sleep on thoughts like that so I lay awake.

Is it the jewels and the fancy cars,

That makes us forget just who we are?

And when the time comes to give it all away

Would you choose to leave it or beg to stay?

Yeah it all looks glamorous in the spotlight.

You can make a million if you play your cards right.

No more late night livin' the street life

Surrounded by bass heads searchin' for bass rocks

To fill they glass pipes...

Nahh those were yesterdays,

But it's imbedded in our bloodlines — we're renegades.

It's so hard for us to make a change

So we accept that fact and live this way,

But we only live for so long
And before you know it it's all gone.
Funerals filled with teary eyes playin' sad songs
For a mother's child who died too young livin' dead wrong.

You see I only spit the facts of life.
Yeah you're good at what you do I'm just tryin to be half as nice.
And if I had the chance to go back and relive half my life,
I wouldn't 'cause wouldn't nothing change
And I'll be forced to relive all that pain twice.

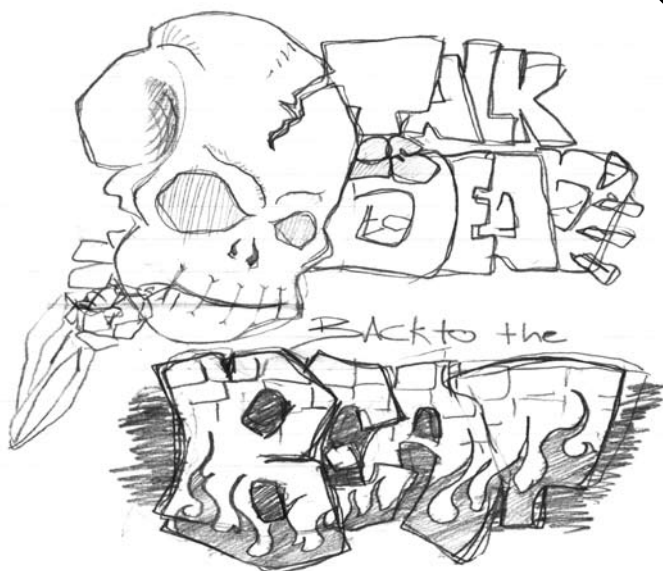
You see everything you see
Before you will one day disappear like a cloud of smoke
And everything you thought you knew
You'll come to find out you didn't know.
And all them material things you tryin' so hard to hold on to
You'll come to realize you gotta let them go.
Temptations just the work of the devil
You gotta look at it from a child's eyes and just say no.
And no this ain't even close to the illest shhhh I ever wrote.
This is only the beginning
I'm just a child of God tryin' to get through to you.
I'm not here to tell you what you should of did,
But what you're supposed to do.
Watch your surroundings — especially the ones close to you
'Cause they're the ones that'll hurt you the most
You heard this all before I ain't told you nothing new.
It's all so innocent like a glass of wine,
But when you finish the bottle you'll change your mind.
Take a look at your hand and open your eyes.
It's more than the hand you're dealt it's the hands of time.
Thanks and God Bless

To Whom It May Concern

Right now, there's someone out there complaining because they didn't get what they wanted for Christmas, because their loved one didn't remember their anniversary, because they're not popular, because they can't afford a pair of new shoes they want, because they have bills to pay, or because, heaven forbid, some hater's spreading rumors. They can enjoy the night sky. They can use the bathroom alone! They don't understand how blessed they are that they can complain over such trivial matters.

Because of my security level, I don't often get a chance to be outside at night. The few times I am though, I cherish the simple beauty of a clear starry sky. Do you know what I think of? I remember a trip I took with my baby's mamma, Chris, and our daughter, Sassy. She was only two and a half and was a daddy's girl. Simply adorable and excited as we walked around the museum in San Francisco. Her favorite part was all the colorful "fishies" in the aquarium. We had so much fun. As the afternoon wore on, Sassy got tired, so we hit the planetarium so she could ooh and aah at the stars as she passed out with a battle of juice. She fell asleep in my arms, and was perfectly at peace. I looked over at Chris and felt warmth in my chest. She looked so beautiful in the star light and I knew that I loved her very much. She saw me looking at her and smiled, leaned over and kissed me deeply. We held hands and listened to the presentation, enjoying the quiet peace of each other's company. That's what I think of when I look to the stars and identify some of the constellations I learned that day. I think of how happy I was to be a father, part of a family, loved. Each moment of beauty is a cherished memory to me. And every blessing is linked to those happiest days of my life. I identify and appreciate them as they come.

I'd gladly trade my burdens for those that some would consider "crucial" for bills, or for questions of popularity. I'd gladly take on a squad of haters if it'd knock a couple years off my shoulders. I'd deal with the disappointment of not being able to afford some new shoes if it'd get me an overnight visit with my daughter, my wife, my mother and brothers. I'd gladly trade it all for a taste of freedom. But I can't. And so, right now, there's someone out there, complaining.



We are so glad we met this next writer because he's one of the most gifted we've come across since creating The Beat back in '96. And it always seems like he's on the same page as us. A couple weeks ago we came with a topic about complaints for the young people to write about because we know that regardless of where you sit in this life, we all have complaints. Well, sent to us, by Ray, along with two beautiful pictures, one of him and the other of his daughter and baby's mother, he sent us a letter and a poem that are definitely must reads. In his letter, he puts things in perspective for us out here as he points out how foolish people are for complaining about miniscule things when something as simple as a clear starry night would silence all of his complaints. When we're deprived of so much, the simplest things cause pleasure and comfort and when we have more than we need, the simplest things cause displeasure and discomfort. We wonder why that is so? Anyhow he closes true to Ray form by dropping some lyrical heat on us. Again, we are grateful to have met this incredible person and very talented writer. He's writing from Pleasant Valley State Prison in Coalinga, CA. Thank you for sharing so much of yourself with us Ray, we really appreciate the love.

Truth Hurts

Am I morally confined by sins? To sin not at all,
Becomes more of a question of being broke, or being
one who balls
Screw sharing, snatch all, calling shots, serving eight
balls to corner pockets
Self-defense systems cock back and fire rockets
Untouchable? Yes
Uncatchable? No
Got locked in a bathroom fo' twenty fo' plus an elbow
Caught up in the matrix, these agents be chasing
Cats who hold keys, getting us locked up fo' lacing
I'm a grape ape, blazing grapes, my fate has become a
test
Faceless with a jacket
My paperwork's my identity
Homies get exposed as hoes, future foes, and enemies
Jealousy sets in, when I collect my grinding pay
We call the game the grind 'cause this shhh will crush
yo' brain
Pressure makes diamonds
Either shine or be coal dust
BBQ when there's beef, burning suckas and stonas
What do you get, when you mix a criminal mind
With anti-depressants that induce stress and suicide
A yard full of cattle with their horns on lock
Cullin' out the weak links. Throwing 'em on the butcher
clock
Too many youngtas brainwashed, got the game all wrong
'Cause they click up with OG's who switch up like
Deceptacons
When you dead wrong, you dead and gone
Or P.C up out the war zone
The truth hurts, so we smoke purp, ninja get it through
yo' dome
No one can do yo' time fo' you
You in a crowd all alone
The popular loner who can't leave home without the
chrome
Gettin' buried in drug debts, spendin' mo' than you
make
For new work, you do dirt, put one foot in a grave
Be shot at or shoot first, upgrade yo' murda game
Getting estranged from loved as you chase some block
fame
Out of sight out of mind
Out of bounds, out of time
Out of excuses, you lose yourself to the local grind
Tryna find freedom chippin' the next man's Pringles
Got caught on the wrong block speakin' out of town
lingo

Things Change

Yesterday, I made a phone call to Danny and Manuel's house. (They used to be my best friends in the world.) Their mom, Connie, my "other mother," answered the phone. As soon as the call was connected, I heard her tell me, "I love you, Mijo," a tone of voice that added to the statement... "no matter what."

Then, in all of five minutes, she chewed me out for not writing often enough, gave me a quick update on at least half of the people in the world (him jail, her jail, he's dead, they're married, guess who had two kids, so-and-so's looking for work, you-know-who is his same crazy self, etc...) And she told me about all the new construction around town. Supposedly, I wouldn't believe how much everything has grown — but I don't think she'd lie about it.

When she was finished talking, or maybe just out of breath, she told me again that she loves me and passed the phone to Manuel. As Connie was handing him the receiver, I — even so many miles away from them and tucked deep into a concrete box — could feel the excitement in their home. "Hurry up, Manuel, hurry!" She was rushing him. "Your brother Michael is on the phone!"

Hearing her refer to me as "Your brother Michael" made mine and Manuel's conversation one of the most difficult I've ever had. It reminded me of how close we once were. And, it reminded me of how much prison (or, possibly, just time itself) has changed that forever.

• • •

Growing up, there was never any part of life that mattered more to us than that Danny, Manuel and me were going to be together. Whether we were all cold, hungry, bored, or all of the opposites. Whether we were breaking the law or breaking from a huddle in a football game at the part, all we ever wanted was to always be with each other.

Our favorite hangout spot was by Danny and Manuel's apartment building in a parking lot full of old, run—down cars and spray-painted evidence of who was and who shouldn't be there. There was always empty buckets flipped upside down, milk crates, and an old beat up couch on the cracked-cement laced piece of earth beneath Danny and Manuel's second-story bedroom window for us to sit around on. Danny would run an extension cord from his room to the ground where we'd plug in a boom box, set it on top of an ice chest full of beer, and turn up the music OGs are always telling us is way before our time.

We would all share a buzz, jokes, some war stories and brag about the last girl we were (probably lying about being) with, and who identified more with whichever oldie was blaring from the boom box's speakers.

"Man, this my song!" one of us would eventually declare. "You don't even know the words, foo!" was a common response.

"Yeah, but it reminds me of that one time I fingered Fat Kim in the back of the van..." And we would laugh.

That, for the most part, was how our everyday together was, and I loved it. There were also times, though, when life was scary. Because, as with all kids in the streets, there always came times for us to have to battle against the world and ourselves for survival. Sometimes we'd have to go out and steal (like when our moms and dads couldn't find or stopped looking for work), and sometimes we'd stay and fight any body trying to bring a new colored rag, a new set of identifying initials, or new drugs into our neighborhood.

There were times, too, when we felt it necessary to come home drunk (or drunker than usual) just to cope with whatever survival had asked of us that day. But no matter what, making it to tomorrow meant none of us had to do it alone — never allowed the others to do it alone — and I loved that, too.

As much as anything, I loved that we were Danny, Manuel and Michael before we (as we eventually came to be known) were Konan, Joker and Tuffy. What everybody else thought or expected of us, whoever they thought we were, never mattered because we had real friendship first. We had a true brotherhood that was far greater than any neighborhood could ever be. Gang-banging came second, always, to who we were as a family.

One day, I tested that theory. It was on a night shortly before

As we indicated last week, the following is an epic story written by an epic writer. Barely a man in legal terms, we look to this young writer not just for the incredible sweep and significance of his story and his ability to tell it, but for real wisdom. Michael Cabral is the embodiment of what happens when the spirit craves to be free — from poverty, from gang influence, from prison. Here, we present the first half of an often-violent journey that begins with childhood friends, through juvenile hall, county jail, and then state prison... from love of homies to betrayal by homies. The combination of brain and heart, honesty and courage, in one so young, inspires us, teaches us, and makes us proud to be able to give voice to the imprisoned who, like Michael, have something important to say. Mr. Cabral says it from his cell at Salinas Valley State Prison.

my fifteenth birthday. Angel (another friend of mine) and I had already been drinking for a few hours before we finally decided to go meet up with Danny, Manuel and whichever other homies were already with them. As we were getting onto the 101 Freeway, about ten minutes from where everybody was, I received a phone call from my mother. We only talked for a few short minutes about nothing in particular, but that conversation truly opened my eyes. "I know, Mom... and I love you, too." Our phone call ended, and Angel said noting to me as I suddenly began to cry, quietly, in the passenger's seat of his car.

It was about 10:00 p.m., a few minutes later, when we arrived at the parking lot. I was drunk, pissed off, scared and still crying. Of course, Danny and Manuel were already there. As soon as they saw me, they were all smiles. Manuel, obviously drunk too, proudly exclaimed something about which side he's from, then held up a bottle of beer as if to tell me, "This one's all you."

When they saw the tears and anger in my eyes, however, looks of concern grew on their faces, and they immediately left the group to meet me and Angel in the middle of the lot. Danny asked me, "Michael, what's wrong?"

I answered by pushing him, hard, into Manuel, who was barely able to catch him before he hit the ground, and yelling, "Fuck you! And fuck you, too, Manuel!" They looked shocked. I had never said anything like that to them before. Then I added, "Fuck all this shit, man. I'm done!"

Obviously confused, Danny asked me again, "Michael, what's wrong?"

What was wrong, I wanted to tell him, was that my mother had just told me over the phone that she loves me. She told me that every day of my life. But this time, it was as if she was telling me for the last time, and I hated that. It scared the hell out of me. I didn't want it to be the last time. I wanted to tell him that what was wrong was that nothing seemed right, that I could deal with survival, and that I would fight forever for the life of him and Manuel because I love them. But I don't understand any more why we gangbang — I don't know what the point of it is. It had even occurred to me to let him know that I wanted to grow up to be a teacher one day. But in my drunkenness, all I could manage, with tears still streaming down my face, was to spread my arms out wide as if to introduce him to where we were, to our neighborhood, and confess that "I don't wanna die!" Then I was reminded of the greatness of our friendship.

At first, figuring it was the alcohol talking through me, Manuel chuckled and was about to say something, but Danny cut him off. "You don't have to, Mike." He looked somehow defeated and proud all at once, as he then made a confession of his own: "None of this matters anyway."

I've only seen Danny cry one other time in my life (he told me once that "this piece of shit world isn't worth crying over"), so I didn't know how to react at that moment, as tears began to well up in and fall from his always angry brown eyes. "all that matters..." he almost sounded offended as he continued, "The only thing that'll ever matter... is that I'm gonna love you forever, Little Brother."

Then, in silence, the longest minute I've ever known passed before I finally said, "I'm jus sick of it. You know?" Both Danny and Manuel nodded their understanding, and one of them even admitted, "Me, too."

After giving Danny and Manuel each a hug, Angel and I got back into the car and drove away. Angel still said nothing to me except that he was proud of me. Before we even came to the first stop sign, though, I knew that I would be back. Because even if it meant my

life, I knew I could never abandon Danny and Manuel, because I know they would never abandon me. We were all we really had.

About a year and a half later, Danny was sent to prison, probably for the rest of his life. Six months after that, so was I.

• • •

On the opposite end of the line, I could hear Manuel breathing deeply and I wondered if he was trying to decide what to say, where to start, or whether he should even speak to me at all. Those were certainly the thoughts running back and forth through my mind. After a few awkward seconds, Manuel broke the silence. "How you doin', Bro?"

I told him I was all right, that I'm "safe and strong, but I miss my people." There was a smile in his voice as he assured me that he and they miss me, too. We spent the next five or six minutes exchanging remember-that-one-time and laughing. I couldn't believe how many incredibly stupid choices we had made together throughout our young history. Then it occurred to me that "history" is all it was, things of the past. So much has changed in the four years I've been incarcerated.

All seriousness returned to my thoughts and voice as I interrupted Manuel's laughter. "I was always there for you, Manuel. For you and Danny." Manuel was obviously caught off guard, and had no response. "Right or wrong, Man, I always had your back." My eyes began to water and my voice began to crack, but I wasn't going to allow myself to cry. I continued, "Do you even know what really happened with me?"

Manuel understood immediately what I was talking about. "Look, Mike, I'm sorry, but..." His voice was all of a sudden sad and full of shame. "But that..."

"...Has never been any of your business, Manuel," I finished for him, my voice firm. "But you could've at least asked me why — or asked me anything — instead of gong with some bunk rumors."

• • •

My seventeenth birthday had barely passed two and half months before I was arrested for murder and sent to juvenile hall, where I would stay for ten months and eventually be sentenced as an adult to sixteen years to life. Before this, I had never even been arrested, so to say the least, I was absolutely terrified. I had never cried more in my entire life than I did in my first week as a prisoner. Danny and Manuel had never seemed more proud of me, though.

During my ten months in the hall, they would write letters to me at least once a week. In Manuel's letters, I was always being reminded to "Keep my head up," to "stay down," to "be strong." I don't think he ever really knew what he was talking about in those letters. But I loved him so much for being there for me the best way he knew how to be.

Danny, already in a state penitentiary, would write to me from his cell and tell me about prison. He'd talk to me about what to expect once I got there, how I should act, who to be wary of. A lot of what he wrote were things I had to pretend not to be afraid of. "Don't even trip, though, homie," he once wrote. "You're gonna see a bunch of crazy shit., but as smart as you are, I know you'll always be all right. Just trust yourself."

In a response to "Trust yourself," I told Danny that I wanted to, but so far trusting myself, my instincts, has only rewarded me with a life sentence. Not at all willing to accept that, he then sarcastically instructed me to ask my mother whether she'd prefer it if the roles were reversed, if I were in the coffin rather than the cell. Then he added one of two things he'd go on to write in every letter afterward: "Don't ever forget that you did what you had to do." He'd also write in all of letters (usually at the end), "I love you forever, Lil' Brother."

The day after my eighteenth birthday, I was transferred from juvenile hall to county jail. By this time, I had already agreed to plead "No contest" to second-degree murder. Now, I was only waiting to officially receive my sixteen-year to life sentence, then be bussed to Wasco State Prison Reception Center. My wait in county was not a long one: I turned eighteen on August 18, 2004, was sentenced on September 3, stepped off the bus for the first

time as a state prisoner on September 27 — a mere six weeks. Six weeks which taught me that it does not take long at all for things to change.

All of a sudden finding myself in county jail, in a new environment, left me with the terrible feeling that I'd been locked up again — though I hadn't known freedom for almost a year now. The kids in juvenile hall would say I "graduated." County jail seemed to me like a giant step down. My cell was smaller and dirtier. The guards were meaner, chow was disgusting, visits now had to be behind glass. I even had to meet my new nephew, Adrian, like that, unable to hug him, saying "I love you" into a phone.) Plus, I didn't know anybody where I was.

So, trying not to think too much about my new hell, I would spend most of my days there laying back on my bunk, just waiting for mail to be passed out, hoping Danny and Manuel would write soon. I couldn't wait for them to continue in feeding my denial, the lie that everything would be all right as long as I had my homies.

But no letters came from them within those six weeks. It made me worry. Not so much about Danny, because I knew he'd reach out to me as soon as he had something he felt needed to be said. And he was a survivor. Manuel, on the other hand, was addicted to meth, a bit of a follower, and had always — even when we were children — relied on me and Danny to keep him from getting into too much trouble. Who knows how many times he would have gotten himself shot or stabbed or beaten for trying to prove how "hard" he is if it weren't for us?) Now Danny and I, all Manuel had, were no longer around to protect him. I had never considered this until his letters stopped coming.

At first, I wanted to be angry that without the slightest of warnings, Manuel's letters just stopped showing up. But I really was more worried than anything. In my worry, I began to assume that in regard to why Manuel hadn't written, there was only truth in the worst-case scenarios. I was convinced that he was either dead or smoked out of his mind behind some dumpster or under some bridge. (Later, I would feel like an absolute jerk for not having any faith in my friend.) every chance I got while in county I would call or write to the people I thought might know and ask about Manuel. I didn't get any answers until after I was transferred to WASCO.

Around 2:30 in the morning on that September 27, I was woken up by a deputy who simply said, "Cabral, roll up your shit! Your bus is here." I got up and packed the few belongings I was going to take with me — some letters, pictures, and a couple of books — and gave whatever was left in my cell to my neighbor. The deputy came back to get me a half hour later. As he was fitting me with waist chains and shackles, I closed my eyes and said a small prayer: "We're going to prison, God. Watch my back."

Fortunately, WASCO turned out to be mostly uneventful for me. In the two months I was there, there were a few melees, one stabbing, and a handful of one-on-one fist fights. But they all had to do with people other than who I was running with, so I was able to just watch and learn, and not think about Danny or Manuel or home, which I didn't until a few weeks before I was transferred when I received a letter from Danny.

Though he really didn't say much in the letter, I was so happy to hear from him. He wrote to tell me where he was, to ask me where I was going, and, of course, to remind me that he loves me forever. At the end of his letter, he added a P.S.: "Oh yeah, I just talked too my brother (Manuel). He said he's sorry for not getting at you lately. The vato checked himself into a rehab a few months ago, and has just been focusing on getting clean. His lazy ass even has a job now! He'll probably drop you a few lines as soon as you get out of Reception." So, Manuel was okay. And he didn't need Danny or me to be okay. I never should have doubt ed that in spite of his flaws, because we all have some. Manuel is a survivor, too.

The same day I received Danny's letter, I wrote him back. I let him know that I was endorsed to Salinas Valley State Prison, and I told him about all the drama at WASCO. "It's a trip, Homie. I just keep wondering when all the bs around is going to involve me. You know, I'm always gonna do whatever I have to do. But, shit's so unpredictable here..."

Before I received Danny's response to that letter, I was gone. Though I was endorsed to Salinas Valley, I was transferred on December 8 to Pelican Bay State Prison. I hated Pelican Bay.

The Past, Present, And Future

Everyone knows that every other person is not perfect, meaning you could have both your high school and some college education, never breaking the law, the best job in the world with the high salary, a big beautiful mansion, a million dollar car, and all the wardrobe you could ever possibly need/want, but you are still not considered a perfect person; not because you could own so many that no one else could, but because there is always another person that has already been in your position and probably moved on to something more advanced, maybe his/her accomplishments are even way advanced than yours, so no one is perfect (basically), except the lord Jesus Christ himself.

Why don't we start with my past, shall we?

Well as you remember me saying earlier, "Nobody Is Perfect" well that goes for everyone, including myself.

I'm here to tell everyone just how horrible my past was, how I change the past to help become the present, and how successful I will become in the future, because of the choices I have already and will make...

First off, I was born in North Oakland, CA, raised in East Oakland, at the age of thirteen I moved from Oakland to San Leandro, CA, only because of all the negativity I was surrounded by and my mother didn't want me around and or involved with that type of stuff, so when we (mother, baby brother and I) moved from Oakland my mom thought that it would all help better myself, but it turned out to be the total opposite.

When you leave somewhere that you have grown attached to, a place you love, a place where you first attended school, and a place where all your friends are, then it's very hard to just up and leave like that, so what did I do? The same thing any other person would usually do when he/her misses there home; I went back to Oakland to visit a few friends, and just like tobacco (after a few days of smoking and or chewing it, it becomes addictive) well after visiting for a few days it became a serious addiction, and as I thought things were getting better and better simply because I was doing oh so well in school... it was actually getting worse and worse (outside of school).

While I would visit a few friends in Oakland, we wouldn't just hang out, kick it, play video games, and drink juice all day, instead we did the total opposite. We drank alcohol, smoked marijuana, and after we would get that certain high we always wanted, we would go out late night/early in the morning like around 12:00a.m to do all types of dirt, rather it was robbing people who would be walking down the street minding their own business, to stealing cars but yet returning them on an empty gas tank, or beating people to death, because of me and or other homeboys mistaking another person for being in the opposite gang known as our rivals.

"Why did we do these things?"

It was to either prove ourselves worthy/down for our gang,

Once a powerhouse participant in our Alameda County Juvenile Hall (150) workshops and now an active member of our crew out here in the office, we bring you an incredible thinker and courageous young man. This week he breaks "The Past, Present, And Future" down for us from his perspective. And when we see where he's been in relationship to where he is now, it amazes us because he's come a really long way. We hope he can continue on a path of productivity because it is nice to see him day in and day out in our office. It's our pleasure to re-introduce Lamar to you from his spot in an office chair enjoying his freedom.

or to gain respect/ranking and or to become known for who we are and what we claim.

"Will it ever cease one day?"

No, because gangs CANNOT be destroyed no matter how much you try, they only multiply. No matter what ethnicity, what size, nor what type of personality you have, if you choose to visit that certain place of not just my city, but any city, almost every single city has that certain place where most citizens rarely visit, because of the danger they could be in if they even attempt to visit any "barrio" without permission just to go to a store to get some groceries for their household, they could be killed especially if they're wearing the wrong color in the opposite gang's territory.

"So how are the authorities handling this situation?"

Well, today the authority has came up with a plan for capturing gang members before any serious crime can be committed; this plan that they have came up with has a name, the name for it is called the "Gang Injunction," and what these police officers do is they go to the most dangerous barrio, pretend to be their gang's rival, shout out what set they're pretending to claim, watches to see who comes running so seek and destroy their rival, takes pictures, then arrest them depending on if the gang member's lie is appropriate or not... (ha-ha lol!)

Well later on within the young adult's future it's going to become even more ruff than what it already has been, then members are really going to start wishing that they should of never joined a gang to begin with. I just hope that the other members could one day lean that you shouldn't go out looking for the dirt, that you should instead let it come to you.

Now that I've slowed down on doing all that hot stuff I could now focus on all the thing I have to do legitimately, instead of "TRYING" to do what's right and having to watch my back every 5 minutes to make sure that there wasn't anybody following/after me, and trust me it feels good to know that there is nobody after you anymore, because everything you are doing is all legit and nobody has not one reason to harass you or beat you up simply because of your affiliation.

So my advice to all the new members out there and or the ones who are down and ready to join; the one word I have for you guys is don't... please do NOT make the same mistake I once made.

May god be with you all...

CHRISTOPHER LEWIS

The Psychology Of The African-American (Male) Prisoner

Psychology is the study, scientifically, of behavior and the mental process. African-Americans is a false term (pseudo), because Africa is a continent, and it has many countries with different cultures. The "male" is the "provider" and of course we know what a prisoner is, or do we?

In my opinion and obvious observations of the African Americans male prisoners, he is: highly aggressive, misogynistic, and about another 100 negative terms you can think of. Immediately, I ask the question, why? Especially, when I also see quite the opposite everyday, not to mention when I introspect myself.

Of course, to understand the mentality of people, we must go into their past, because the brain is literally

We have yet another first time writer on the prowl to get his ideas out so people can either take them or leave them. And he does so in a way that leaves us wanting more. Obviously just a snippet of a much larger piece, Christopher sends us about three paragraphs and then says if we're interested he'll write more. Well, first of all we want to read the rest of this piece, so could you send that for starters? And secondly, of course we want to hear more. That's what we're here for. So next time you write us, can you send us a full piece? We're using this one because it's your first time and we know how empowering it can be to see your piece published. Thank you. We're waiting for the rest... Oh, by the way, he's writing from the Illinois Department of Corrections in Sumner, Illinois.

shaped by its environment at an early age. Also, we must consider the factor of heredity (native). So, why have so many "different" people ended up in situations resulting in the phenomenon of incarceration?

If interested in more commentaries on this subject matter and many more, please let me know...

Dimensions

I'm trapped here
 Just right here
 But on the other side
 In the dimensions we hide
 Just right here
 But on the other side
 Not just here
 But over there
 In the mirror inside the mirror
 Not the one we know
 But the one we fear
 In the mirror inside the mirror
 Where I hold this!
 And it melts in my mouth
 But not in your hands
 Where I hold this slide of hand
 Blink in your eyes
 It turns to sand
 Where I touch this!
 Entwisted truth
 Mathematics for your inner soul
 Where touch this; to know?
 You just say the magic words
 And trapped things turn to flying birds.
 The Meek Shall Inherit The Earth
 Baked inside this austere palace
 The clock turns left than leaves a callous
 Where blood once spilled is poured again
 And fat cats watch on with happy grins
 So find your meat hook, sharpen your cleaver,
 Justice too the unjust received
 Just put their heads on the choppin' block
 Or better yet-
 Lock 'em up until their bodies rot
 And the meek shall inherit the earth!
 Creatures kicked out from the gardens
 To desert lands where their souls harden
 In tracked homes, on dead end streets
 They turn on their TVs for a media feast
 They drink their OJ
 And they swallow their bobbit
 Once you get hooked man
 You know its hard to get off it
 I got so high on that cathode beam
 I'm having champagne wishes
 And caviar dreams
 And the meek shall inherit the earth!

This next writer's mind is somewhat of an enigma because his rhymes are told almost in riddle form. He sends us three poems, "Dimensions," "Monkey Polka," and "Windows, Doors, And Whores." Each of them carry their own mystery and the only way to unlock it is to try and empathize with the writer. He's writing from Corcoran State Prison in Corcoran, CA.

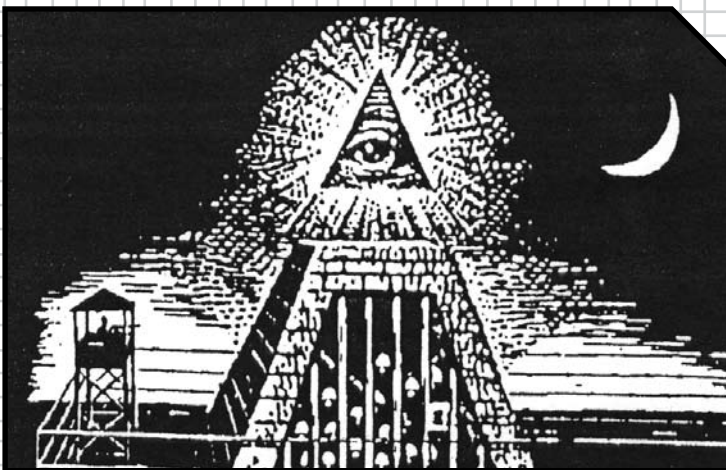
Window, Door, Whore

Passing through the ages and told through turning
 pages
 A man steps high, onto a mountain and throws out rules
 into a fountain
 Were their minions drink and forget then they think
 Forget that they have power forget then that they see
 To see - what is their justice?
 As if the heart is where the trust is
 And don't you know, don't you know?
 You know your eyes will tell you lies,
 You know theres angels in the skies
 You watch them dance and prance and twinkle
 Even pure light has wrinkle - in time...
 And times flimsy dressing, which you cant go always
 pressing
 But must continue on caressing, forever dressing and
 undressing
 And don't you know? Don't you know?
 Time is just a window
 Death is just a door
 Nature is nothing...
 Nothing but a whore.

Long ago but not forgotten a man stepped into
 something rotten
 A pungent musk, so sweet yet sour; he became the
 victim of the flower
 And when he took that needle for a ride
 He found himself on the other side
 If it wasn't bad it wouldn't be any good
 Might have got out if he could.

Monkey Polka

Lost in the poppie fields in the heart of the city
 Looking for blessings from the opium goddess
 With each injection the door is cracked
 To a painless world of dreams
 With time and hinges, rusted
 Souls are sold — cheaper by the dozen
 Sorrow is suspended till the goddess eludes us
 And the criminal returns — now
 ... This monkeys doin polkas on my back
 These generic junkies all stuck in his tracks
 So now I lie, and cheat, and steal;
 To find the goddess and cop a feel
 At the mercy of her warm embrace
 Arms held out, I leap from grace
 Oh baby! Suck blood from my bones
 Won't you take good care of this Jones
 And now there's only you!
 And if the daily homage is ignored,
 We're punished with aches, and pains, and lust
 So thick, that it must be treated
 With a needle prick
 So we'll kick and squeal like fresh birth
 We'll beg to be ejected from this earth
 We'll crawl back into the womb



My Introduction

My introduction may start off a little ruff,
 The ghetto of class poverty deadened any heartfelt
 emotions...

Just too recently I didn't give a

The south central streets foretold my destiny
 My body chalk-lined or my life penitentiary invested,
 In between...

Gang-bang connected.

As I rewind back a little-bit,

I can tell you how drugs destroyed my family happiness.
 The day the streets snatched my grandmother away...

Became the day that seemingly sealed my fate,
 Moms couldn't handle it — she sought escape...

Still don't know pops 'till this very day.

That little white devil offered moms escape...

What it did to her left me in dismay,

Too painful for me to elaborate!

So much anger, so much hate...

Then childcare services took me and my siblings away,
 Taken to a foreign atmosphere where people pretend to care.

My first jacket...

Captivity my shoulders were to bear,

Group homes, foster homes; I been damn near to them all

Hit juvie, seen camp, now these penitentiary walls,

The judge said this is my final destination

I sensed triumph in his voice

I recognized it as complacent.

Another African committed to statistics.

Modern day plantation ran by sadistics!

My burden, our burden has yet to ease,

Our plight is heavy rather stiff indeed.

Nevertheless we must remain vigilant than ever,

For only "we" can make us free!

This is the introduction of many of us in "captivity"

Shall we not mold our own conclusion?

The war isn't over...

But the battle we are losing

Writing from Corcoran State Prison in Corcoran, CA, we give you a hot new writer on the scene. He's read The Beat and has got affected by it like most of us do, with utter amazement and respect for the intelligent writing we publish. It's a shame that most of the kids writing aren't even aware of how many people they reach. Most of them would probably take the workshops more serious if they did know. But anyhow, this next writer hits us with a letter and two very talented poems. His letter is where he expresses his appreciation for what The Beat's doing. His first poem is about him and his 'introduction' to us. And he closes with a very powerful poem dedicated to a very powerful woman — his mother. Be on the look out for Imani Mason, because it seems like he'll quickly become a Beat favorite.

A Gift From The Heart To A Black Mother Queen

Mother, I shall let it be known that you are loved
 Precious and cherished by many and our creator...

Above

Your eyes tell a story, who has seen and endured much

Yet you possess a great strength; to never give up

Each day is a struggle — but it can't last

You said it yourself; "this too will pass"

Up ahead mother! The road gets smooth

Persevere queen the future looks promising for you

Since you are a queen; does that make me a king?

Reign proud mother, you birthed ten beautiful off-spring

So hold your head high, better yet look to the heavens

You need not answer my question, your first born;

A king — will always hold you with reverence

On you special day, ordinary as it seems...

Here, a gift from the heart to my;

Black mother queen.

Dear Beat Within

First off, it is my hopes that this letter reaches your staff and organization in the best of health in all aspects. I extend an abundance of respect and gratitude to you all for your unwavering of concern and attention to those of us behind these institution walls. Truly you are doing exactly what the penal system has failed to do; that is reach out to us and allow us to express ourselves unveiled, as well as allow us to take a glimpse at each other's sorrows, happiness, and aspirations. Something that is rare as we know it but dare not expose such vulnerability. So it sits well with me to know that I can obtain and contribute a two-fold accomplishment; one is to express myself, and two would be to connect with someone else's problems and maybe they can find some comfort in the expressions as I have; which cause me to be inspired to pour-forth a thought or two via The Beat Within. Once again, thank you!

In addition, I wish to become a subscriber. Accompanied with this letter and request, is two (2) works that I've written, one is dedicated to my moms and the other is a spontaneous spill of emotions uncut. If they are worthy, could you publish them in The Beat Within and send me the volume that it will be featured in? Thank you in advance! Also, I'm in the Corcoran SHU, waiting to be put up for transfer but this will probably be a while, so don't hesitate to subscribe me. Worse come to worse; I will diligently inform you if I transfer. Promise!

Well, this concludes my letter, a firm salute to the advocate of the struggle. "We know that we must stand and fight for an upward movement for the human family. Our tasks are laid at our doors, by grace and blood these tasks shall be unflinchingly performed."



My Life

There are sudden rips. There are tears in your life, deep knife wounds that slash through your flesh. Your life is one thing, then it is shredded into another. It comes apart as though it has been gutted. And then there are those moments when your life simply unravels — a loose thread is pulled, a seam gives way. The change is always slow at first nearly imperceptible.

At this moment my life is just a bunch of threads rolled into a never-ending string of bad events And all I can do is ask myself why I let it get this bad, so fast? Get a hold of life, before it's too late! Be easy!

A Butterfly Said To Me...

Humility and humble beginnings, are roots to everlasting grace.

So why worry in a world where it has no place?
 Your extremities

Are the creator's opportunities.

So lift your head to the sky,

Because you know I used to crawl, but now I can fly!

*I wonder how many tears I've shed as I
 prayed for the time to rewind itself so I
 could play w/ him for just one more day
 — to share his simple world.*

Dear Beat

I know as I have read, that you are currently not accepting submissions for the 15th editorial Note writing contest titled "Turning Back The Hands Of The Time." But I feel as if I needed to share this with you. Here goes.

To turn back one's time in this life is impossible, yet so many of us outcasts seems to always wish we could. If only for a moment. If I had a chance to turn back the hands of time, I would only go back 2 years to when my little man was 2 years old, and right before I came to prison. If I'd only have known then, what I know now, I would memorize the sound of my son's voice and play it over and over in my head. The sound of him laughing and the honest closeness and gentle touch of my mother. I would've spent a lot of time with a little boy with soft hands. Hands I've held so many times, yet not enough.

I'm haunted by memories of that little boy being yelled at for some unremembered mistake he made. That little boy sad and ashamed because I was upset with everything else at the time, besides the small mistake he made. Do you know or have any idea what I would give to reclaim the very last moment I yelled at that precious little boy? I wonder how many tears I've shed as I prayed for the time to rewind itself so I could play w/ him for just one more day — to share his simple world. To be able to hear his laughter and the joy that is in it. Feel the touch of those little hands and to be called mommy for just one day, I don't know if there is any way possible to turn back the hands of time. But after countless nights alone in a dark prison cell I do know exactly what I'd do if I could, I would feel a gentle loving touch from soft little hands and never let them go again.

Writing from the Pennsylvania Department Of Corrections in Cambridge Springs, PA, we give you this self-proclaimed first timer... She said she read a Beat and was inspired by a piece written by Johnnie. We love hearing how this publication works on so many levels. We love that it offers hope and faith where hope and faith is easily lost. And as you can see, you don't have to be from the bay area to reap the incredible benefits of reading and writing for The Beat. She also gives her creations to us; one of which was inspired by Johnnie, but to her future ex, John. She then closes with a piece that would've been a great contender for our last contest, too bad it was too late. She says if she could turn back the hands of time, she'd rewind the time back to when she had her baby son in her arms.

What It Do Beat

First-timer here. I just recently got my hands on an issue of The Beat, and I have to tell you that there is some amazing writing in there. I would like to comment on Johnnie Michael's, "Beauty Part Three." It's almost like I needed to read that. I've been in a relationship for 5 years with a man I can't leave no matter how bad I want to and that writing (well, letter) gave me a new sense of hope. So I think I'm writing him a letter finally to tell him how I feel.

And to Johnny, I hope you found the right one for you this time. It's one of the hardest things in life to accomplish, you know finding your "soul mate." Also please let Johnny know he gave me the inspiration to send in my latest work called, 'To John,' who is my boyfriend hopefully ex soon. Thanks Johnny you're my inspiration. I thought I found mine but I was wrong.

I sent a few of my own writing that I hope you could include in your next newsletter. Also can I get a subscription? The name's Sara by the way. I'm 24 and in state in Cambridge Springs PA. Hope to hear from you until then. Be easy. I give permission for the following poems and writings to be printed. Also if possible could I get a response.

Much Love

To John

You could have it all,
 My empire of dirt.
 I will let you down,
 I will make you hurt.
 I wear this crown of thorns,
 Upon my liar's chair
 It is simply something
 I cannot repair
 Beneath the stains of time
 The feelings disappear
 You seem like someone else
 Why am I still here?
 What have I become my friend?
 Everyone I love, seems to go away in the end!
 If I could start again,
 A million miles away
 I would keep just myself.
 I would find a way.
 I will keep on going,
 I will have no fear.
 And when I get to where I'm going,
 Please don't cry for me
 Down here!

Inside The Mind Of A Convicted Criminal

Heavenly Fatha', I can't seem to find the solace of sleep!
 Can't seem to realize inna' poise or any degrees of serenity –
 Lord, have mercy;
 (I'm unda' siege!)

And even in the dim lit quiescence of the night,
 Thangs ain't right;
 They gotta man's spirit and mind engaged
 In the weird and ruthless fight;
 'Cause now, see, I can actually feel the finga' of fear –
 touchin' me;

And I can also hear the sinista' whispa' (whistlin') of the
 hauntin' sounds round about me;
 A tauntin' mockery and a teasin' misery – Lord! Am I going
 crazy!?

Or, is it just my mind falterin'
 From all the dirty tricks they playin' on me?
 Scarcely can a ninja see...

The difference between the two hearts of the beast;
 Grim and grisly Black gangsta' constantly on the creep –
 believe me!

Lack wit' racist hybrids practicing their prison politricks –
 inverted violence!

Lunatic and sadistic war games bein' played on the celestial
 plane – I can't deny it!

Inexpressible pressa' and pain pushin' hard in this devil's
 domain;

Invisible blood stains on the official sigils of powa' – a dam'
 shame!!

So, don't listen to the dramatic tales they be tellin' you,
 cause' Blacks be throttled and subdued;

And I ain't the one to explain and excuse how quick these
 cowards will flip and beat on you;
 Cause early one monin' I heard a wicked s-toned whistle –
 it's all spiritual!

And I remember one last Black soul made the fatal mistake
 of voicin' his personal dissent (apolitical!)

Against a certain body of the so-called Black gangsta' – he
 shouldn't of did it;

Cause' swift came about six who viciously swung hateful
 and heartless fists and kicks – they killed 'em;
 Stump the dumb and the slow into oblivion – a strange
 fulfillment realized in Black on Black murder;

And they all caught life sentences in the twinklin' of an eye –
 So don't cry! Cause' you deserve it;

Listen to me now!! Cause' I know what I speak and I know
 what I see;

California convicts on hands and knees –
 Bowed down befo' the deformed feet... of the Beast;

Books wide open but they still can't read 'em,
 Cause these issues are all maddenin' and misleadin'
 Specialized shifts in modern penal punishment – now
 envision this;

Entire prison populations struck down dumb with
 astonishment

Steept in a stygian darkness, blunderin', gropin' fo' light,
 fumblin' –

Ultimately tumblin' toward the "Divine Comeuppance"
 Lord! Lord! How deep is this Bottomless Confusion?
 I plead with thee to tell me;

How long must me suffa' this satanic persecution? –
 The wrong people sittin' in seats of power;
 A network of mindless evil

Encirclin' everything beautiful in the dark hour;
 Woe, I say! to the sad-sacks and mad-caps and the wolf-
 packs here

And now devoured;

Lord, pleeeeee! Rememba' me – the condemned man

Writing from the RJ Donovan Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation in San Diego, CA, we bring to you a philosopher of sorts. He starts us off with a poem titled, "Inside The Mind Of A Convicted Criminal," where he talks to God and asks Him to have mercy on him. He uses a lot of thought provoking words to express the depth of his ideas. He then concludes with somewhat of a letter to us and we couldn't ask for more. Read on and let us know what you think of his writing...



Now Then

With all that being said, it is mine honest and earnest hope that I have proven myself worthy of receiving a reply. I am in the unique position to do a meaningful service, and, I aim to fulfill my destiny – where so ever the tides of resistless fate might take me. But, now, in coming to a close, there is one more point of importance that I want to make perfect and sharp: namely, the "Racist Spirits of Hatred" that haunts Southern California in a way that exceeds the dismal spectacles of racism characteristic of the initial development of the United States.

Something has happened — something quite supernatural is now being realized and it lends eerie strength to this "Racist Spirit of Hatred" that actually cast a morbid fog places, like Los Angeles, and charges the atmosphere with a tension that is unseen but deeply felt. The orb of influence of this "Racist Spirit of Hatred" is wide and strong. What is worse, however, is that this "Racist Spirit of Hatred" does not corrupt and kill by itself. It is accompanied by a number of other skulking spirits of evil – namely, vanity, jealousy, selfish and sordid passions, brilliant smiles with hidden motives, envy, fear, ignorance, unnatural affection, sadism, dissimulation, and other evil spirits that I am not gifted to rightly define. All of these unseen soldiers (hell-sent!) are the real forces behind drug/alcohol consumption and relapse, as well as the high rate of recidivism. As a matter of fact, I trace my present re-imprisonment directly back to these creeping spirits.

But, as I have hinted at afore, the chieftain here is racism – human hatred and deception. Obviously, we might say the race hate is elaborately bedecked in deception. People think to raise human consciousness with a lying master grip of human hatred – it will never work! Thus, please, do not expect for me to mince words or show mercy to the unmerciful. I will, and must! Bow to higher orbs of influence where with I shall be as unbiased and comprehensive as is within my power – but, I will not lie or distort the truth when I know what it is.

Sincerely Purposeful,

*I choose my life, I caught my strikes
 I fought my fight
 I'm scared for life*

Some Words

I'm scared to cry, but not afraid to die
 I share my wisdom but not my life,
 I witness the strife but can't break the ice
 I live in the game that's faster than sight
 I choose my life, I caught my strikes
 I fought my fight
 I'm scared for life
 You make mistakes but that part of life
 You learn from life, then go do right
 You choose your hypes but don't abuse your might
 Pray to Christ, He'll make it right
 Tell Him your problems He'll change your life

Writing from San Quentin State Prison in San Quentin, CA, we bring you a young man who is never at a loss for words. And we're glad he isn't because his words are very thoughtful and intelligent. This week he relinquishes two poems our way and both of them are equally as good as the other. The first, "Stand Up," is a challenge to those who are still living the lifestyle that usually ends up with incarceration or death. And the second, "Some Words," is some words of wisdom from him as he opens his heart to us. Read on and be satisfied as we were. By the way, Isaac grew up with The Beat Within through his stints in Alameda County Juvenile Hall.

Stand Up

Is it because I'm black?
 That they think I'm rude,
 Lost inside a world that's cute,
 Nothing but hate pump up they fuel.
 They kill just to kill to be cool.
 Kill they own brother and be a fool.
 Don't want to educate themselves so they leave school.
 Violated, mislead and used
 Disrespected, rejected and abused
 To live or die what do you choose?
 Are you mad, depressed or confused

Question Mark

Where do we go after we die?
 Do we float to the sky.
 Is God real?
 There is a lot of opinions.
 Some say that people made him up
 To confide in Him
 About our everyday problems
 Others say that He is the almighty
 Who created everyone and everything.
 But can you answer this
 If God made everything then who made him?
 Before he made the universe was black, nothing?
 When god made the earth in the bible it says nothing
 about dinosaurs
 But scientists say that dinosaurs roamed our earth
 before we did.
 In the bible it just says Adam and Eve ate the apple
 Off the tree of knowledge and
 Yada, yada, yada.
 So who came first?
 Adam and Eve or dinosaurs?
 Who do you believe?
 Scientists or the almighty God?
 What about this
 How do you think all of the human races
 Is going to die and if or
 When we do cease to exist
 What is going to be it like?
 A total black emptiness
 I have a lot of questions.
 I just wish someone could answer
 A few of them for me.
 Where do we go when we die?
 Do we float to the sky?
 I know my opinion I believe in God
 What do you think?

CHARLIE BROWN

This next writer is full of love and a whole lot of questions and you'll see what we mean when you read this through. He sends us two poems, the first to his girlfriend on the outs and the second is a list of questions all dealing with our existence as human beings and whether or not there's a God. He's writing from ROP in San Andreas, CA. We hope he finds the answers he's looking for to the great questions he's asked. And as for his girlfriend, we hope he sent this to her and not just to us.

This Is

This is to my girl
 Who is as priceless to me?
 As diamond pearls

 This is to my hyna
 Who is delicate?
 As some expensive China

 This is to my lady
 Who always calls me crazy?
 But know that one-day
 I'll settle down
 So she can have my baby

 This is to my love
 Who is as beautiful
 As a white dove

 This is to my wifey
 Who I wish
 Was in my bed nightly

 This is to my Monica
 Who I still love with all my heart
 Baby I want you to know that
 I would give anything for a second start
 Baby I miss you even though
 I'm behind these bars my love will always stay true.

Glimpse

Let me put my thoughts which I've conceived through life
 The pickings of my brain like a vultures delight
 In the past it was nothing but fighting and stealing
 Gats was peeling didn't care how no one was feeling
 Smoking weed on the regular treating my body cruel
 Busting down eighteen packs while I was cutting out school
 Moms was usin' too, my father met his death
 My grandma developed cancer, what the hell I got left?
 People are dying, the twin towers are falling
 I see no answers in religion, God where is my calling?
 The streets are appealing sexy chicks in mini skirts
 While ugly girls and losers all going church
 Moms packed up our bags, moved to a new place
 But the kids were the same, crime at a fast pace
 Got down with the wolf pack like
 Mowgli from Jungle Book
 Learned how to weigh crack and
 And let the coke cook on the streets
 Wasn't the only one on the streets who was hungry for money
 Couple times they tried to run up
 And take my stuff from me
 Wasn't wit' it though, my boys all stood by my side
 Whether we'd won or we'd lost I knew I had my pride
 Went back to the corner selling drugs to my patients
 But I had to be careful, judge put me on probation
 Then I had a girl in my life to give me hope
 One to hold me through all the hard times like a rope
 Made me wanna do good get an education

This next first time writer was introduced to us by our dear friend. He's writing from the Highland Juvenile Center in Highland, NY, so this poem has traveled a very long way. He gives us a 'glimpse' of the life he led and a little bit about how he feels. We can tell he's very talented and want to accept here at The Beat as one of our own. In his letter he says he writes stories, poems, or whatever else — he can write it all. We are really looking forward to seeing him in our pages more consistently, so hopefully our slow turn around doesn't discourage him from writing us. Great piece, Carl...

Go to school and keep myself away from the police situation
 Life style wouldn't change though, too entertained by
 doing wrong
 Still smoking and drinking staying out 'till dawn
 On and on day after day, I started letting my girl down
 Promiscuous relationships all over town
 Finally they got me. Cops locked me
 I didn't run, they had guns out and I thought they might shoot me
 Went through the court thing and I got locked up
 Lost everything and yet still problems pop up
 I want my teenage years and my H.S. diploma
 Complications getting out, feeling like my life's over
 They tryin' to change my bad ways
 Keep me out of town
 Get my life on track and stop messin' around
 And I fear for myself for the chance I may fail
 'Cause try as I may I've been yet to prevail
 Working diligently towards a plan to advocate my success
 If I'm good at bad I could be good at good, more or less
 So what I've gotta do is keep doing
 If I fall get up
 'Cause the best thing for me to do is keep my head up.

Somewhere In Time

The dogs howl in the distance
 The moon is a welcome face
 Frightened I must confess
 Painfully searching for fleeting grace

The silence combined with your trembling
 Leaves you in confusion
 Your thoughts are now disassembling
 As your reality becomes an illusion

Give me but my one defense
 A weapon sharp and clean
 To apply without my malevolence
 In my vain you cannot be seen

Mystery is my fashion
 Curiosity entails expression
 That of which ones passion
 Turns me to discretion

For behind these gates, lies my dilapidated tower
 A scene in which all anticipate a desolation sour
 For behind my walls of madness, lies the omnipotence
 you pursue
 Together with your sadness, is all you misconstrued?

Searching frantically through time
 Gathering the puzzles from my mind
 Hoping for the treasures, you may someday hope to find...
 In loving memory of Cara

MICHAEL FOSTER

It's sad when we are made to feel like the only way the evil will die within us, is if we ourselves are to die. But that's the case with so many of us. There are so many of us locked away in dungeons across America where we sweep our 'problems' under the rug as if that will make them go away. We're a country that prides itself on not dealing with our troubles, so we continually ignore them while constantly butting our noses in everyone else's business. But anyhow, this next writer is writing from Calipatria State Prison where he's serving a 41-year to life sentence... Damn! Our hearts go out to him while our minds are intrigued by what he had to say. Hopefully this won't be the last time we hear from him, but we know as well as anyone how hard it can be to keep in contact sometimes. Hopefully our hopes will become reality... We'll see...

The Evil Finally Dies

The room is spinning faster now
 The tears are streaming down my face
 My head is spinning round and round
 In this strange and wicked place

The sweat drips off my forehead
 My mind is in a daze
 I didn't listen when they said
 There are many other ways

Now the time has come
 My life is in my hands
 My body is turning cold
 Yet still no one understands

Now I'll close my eyes
 As hopefully with this last breath
 The evil finally dies...
 In loving memory of Cara

It's A Better Way

Hey allow me to extend my respect to you all at The Beat. My name is Leo aka Suave from Hayward. First, I would like to send a message out to all them young homies gang banging wasting their life away for something they know nothing about.

I've been in and out of prisons for the past sixteen years and my eyes are open. There is no loyalty in what I was fighting for. Only suffering was in my so-called struggle. I want the kids to know there is a better way of life to live. 'Cause when you're sitting in the pen in the hall, East Block, at San Quentin you'll see that all your homies are nowhere around. Yeah, most of you might be saying I'm no good 'cause I'm a drop out. But it took a real man to do what I did and what I'm doing now, letting you kids know that there is more to life than being in the gang. Remember put God and your family first 'cause when times get hard they will never let you down!

To Che

My one true love.

Ever since you came into my life you made me a very happy man.

I know what true love is, to love a good woman, to have a very meaningful religion!

So baby keep your head up 'cause this bad dream will be over soon! Love always,
This is to my wife Cheryl,
God Bless...

THE BEAT
WITHOUT

Some Real Talk

I'm not an intellectual by any means

But I am a man with a strong hunger for knowledge,
Of any type!

Wisdom may linger, but knowledge will come,

It's said the limit of my tongue is the limit of my mind

Because all I know is what I have words for,

During one of my many feats, I've learned that language

Has created the word loneliness to express pain of
Being alone and the words of solitude to express the glory
Of being alone.

I've learned that a good book and letter writing are
The perfect devices for combining solitude with good
company.

All of us in here are watchers of that television out there
And the traffic on the tier, but few of us are observers.

Everyone is looking, but not too many are seeing what
that

Dummy Box (T-V) is doing.

Many of you are quick to shoot off at the mouth
It's also well known that speaking without thinking is like

Most of you probably look at dropouts as weak or disloyal, but we like to think of them as human beings too who have made a difficult choice, and in the end, if they feel better, that's all that matters. Especially in a place where gangs are formed as a survival mechanism and the mere interest in getting out can be detrimental to your life. Not only that, but while incarcerated we can get very lonely and so it's sometimes nice to have an associate or two to help the time pass by quicker. But if you're not part of that lifestyle anymore it can be very difficult to live a life behind bars. That's why we believe it takes an extremely strong person to do what he did. Now he's relaying his experiences to us so we can learn from his mistakes. And though most of you may not want to take heed to what he's saying, we're almost sure you will later on in life if you continue down the negative path you paved for yourself. He's writing from San Quentin State Prison in San Quentin, CA.

*Well, I got's lots to say of
life in these walls so be look-
ing for my letter and drawing.
I would love to see my words
and artwork in your paper.*

The Beat Within

Man, good looking out for my first two papers of The Beat. Man, it's good reading. Like I said in my first letter to you guys I am a gang drop out. My eyes are open for a new life, a new way. I don't care what any one thinks of me. Gangs ain't a part of my life.

I want to teach our kids that the thug life ain't it... Well, I got's lots to say of life in these walls so be looking for my letter and drawing. I would love to see my words and artwork in your paper.

I wanted to know, can I get your paper every week? I would be very thankful, keep up the good work.

GERALD CHAVEZ

Writing from High Desert State Prison in Susanville, CA, we give you a man who hits us with 'some real talk.' Most of his real talk has to do with the power of education and what's more real than learning. He gives great examples of why knowledge is so important. He also makes comparisons that are so similar it lets you understand what he's talking about even if you didn't at first. We really appreciate writing like this... writing that's 'some real talk.'

Shooting without taking aim, nature has blessed us with
one

Tongue, but two ears, that way we may hear from others
Twice as much as we speak.

I have also observed many men with different
personalities,

I've come to understand that every man has three
characters

1. That which we exhibit. 2. That which we actually have 3.
And that which we think we have!

To always stay hungry, I keep in mind that, a man without
knowledge is like a flower without a scent. And if you
want to apply it to prison life, a man without knowledge is
like a piece without a handle and a good tip! Don't be dull,
get sharp and seek that knowledge!

I think of how happy I was to be a father, part of a family, loved. Each moment of beauty is a cherished memory to me. And every blessing is linked to those happiest days of my life. I identify and appreciate them as they come.

read the rest of Ray Sanchez Jr.'s POW on page 49

